



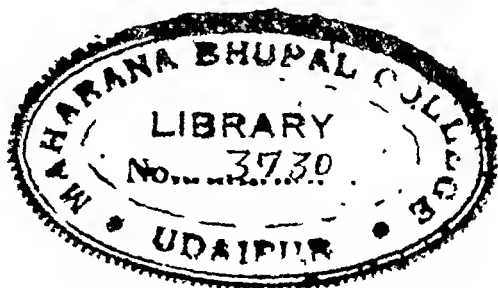
# THE FOOL NEXT DOOR

&c.

By

"EX-TRAM-CONDUCTOR No. 317"

(N. D. DOUGLAS)



LONDON: C. W. DANIEL, LTD.  
Graham House, Tudor Street, London, E.C. 4

*I am indebted to Messrs Cassell and Messrs  
J M Dent & Sons and to Mr G K Chesterton  
for permission to publish the quotations from  
Chesterton's writings.—N D D*

Inscribed to B.

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## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR.

*(A free translation of a narrative attributed to a Jew of the first Christian Century.)*

I did not see him at the end, when his mistakes became the cause of legal punishment and when he had at last to pay the penalty of which all the civilised world has heard. But I knew him by sight, for he passed my door sometimes twenty times a day. At that time I kept a barber's stall in the street, which, being new, was called the "street of houses," because most of the old streets had shops mixed among the houses. Mine was the only establishment of that sort in our street.

I did a select business; not many came to me except the most modern and progressive gentlemen of the city. This was because I



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studied new methods, and my art (as I can claim to call it)—upon which a great deal of my leisure time is spent and my secret hours of night too when I cannot get sleep—has often been misunderstood by customers who expect certain things which they do not find and find other things which were not expected.

Of course I am not now the young enthusiast who has his reputation to make among his contemporaries but rather an old pioneer who has seen most of his ideas taken up and perverted by the younger generation.

It was not a wealthy street in which my shop stood. As already said it was a new street and there were more houses in it than places of business. I did not then expect high fees, for I was enthusiastic and I believed that customers would flock to me when my methods became generally understood. The houses were occupied by clerks assisting the administration and by men of the merchant class who had not yet the money to reside in the better quarters. Several of the neighbours who passed my windows were young men with children and I used to speculate on what a dramatic and strange coincidence it would be if round the reforming shop of a man who might call himself 'a true artist in hair' there should

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develop a community of young people who would (as it were) separate from the rest of the city and in course of time fulfil his ideas.

The man, for whom I cannot help feeling some degree of admiration, amounting almost to reverence (and it is comparatively easy, and safe, to say so from the remote place from whence I am now writing), was an accidental inhabitant of our street for a few months of his early manhood. He was poor, and not prosperous in business—or, more accurately, in his trade as a carpenter and joiner; and I do not think that he was seriously trying to earn a steady livelihood, even at that early date, before his preaching activities began. However, although I have but a casual knowledge of work connected with wood, and I admit that to me it is often a marvel how workmen do a thing, I venture to aver that his ability would have been very great in his trade if he had adhered to it perseveringly.

He had certainly a lovely face. Now, let me dwell a moment on this point, because so much has been written and said against him, that allegations of deformity, insignificance, even ugliness and absurdity of appearance, have been made against him by men who either did not know him at all, or did not know him at

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the same time of his life as I did. I have read in a writer of such orthodox repute that I shall not name him (but the reference is sufficient) that this preacher was a withered, scrawny and dingy man, underfed and ragged, that his clothes were dark with dirt. This writer also said that workmen and animals loved him better than clean and tidy people did, and that he made no 'impression' upon the intelligent people who met him. One writer—not the same, but one of less prestige—declared that the prophet (so-called) was a very ordinary workman; elsewhere this author repeats—A commonplace member of the working class, except that he was ambitious.

One of the young residents in our street at that date said to me, when Jesus's religious zeal began to be manifest, "He is not ambitious. He does not want to be a priest. But that is by the way. We all know that there are many other forms of ambition."

I cannot continue to write in the same spirit in which I began this reminiscence. That awful thought, which one of the poets has expressed in such magically living lines, has come back to me again. It came to me often, I confess, when Jesus Christ was alive, though not when I first knew him by sight. Partly

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because it came back to me so often at the time of his death, I left Jerusalem and took up my residence in a place which is no home to me. The thought is—perhaps his ambitions were justified! An intelligent reader will understand what that “perhaps” involves! It is too great a terror and a flight.

But we have learned for many, many years that a Saviour would come; and might not this be he? The proofs of his works might be conveyed by men of small importance in origin, and, except in one or two instances, of little education. But education is nothing; insight, faith, is all. I have been a reformer, and I have had education. I know many books, I read reports, I learn from many sorts of people who are experts at their own vocations. But I find that my learning does not help me much in discovering new ideas; these have to come from some other source within me. It may be so also with the perception of new ideas as they are embodied in a man's life; as in the unexampled life of Christ. The wise and lettered may stumble; they may be occupied on the threshold by some iota, as a lady may trip on the hem of her own gown. Working men, poor half-naked people, may enter into the little house, and (being in this case of the

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same class in industry) may understand the life that is going on under the lowly roof

It was indeed a little house, and a lowly roof where he stayed when I used to see him, for at that time I saw him at least twenty times a day, except when he went away out of the town. He could never have dwelt there one week not to speak of months if someone had not helped him with his landlord and I have no doubt that it was one of those who afterwards became prominent among his adherents who did him this service. He stayed in a shed which had been intended for storing oil and wood thieves were at that time numerous in the outskirts of the city (and highway robbery too for that matter) and this outside storehouse was considered by the householder to be insecure because the door was broken and the rear wall also. This householder is still living in Palestine and he is a dear friend of mine so that I shall not name him in case that intimate eminence should get him into trouble. He was one of the kindest men I ever met and his acquaintances still tell me of acts of his which are full of beautiful charity. No matter how poor a man were, this worthy son of our fathers would befriend him and in fact he preferred to assist poor men because as he

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truly said, they needed it more than the rich.

So Jesus stayed two or three months in this shed, being alone there almost the whole of the time. One or two nights men slept with him in the dark hovel; there was room enough in it for perhaps three persons to lie on three rows of strong shelves. I used to admire the carpenter's preference for fresh air. My own ideas have always been against the Jewish methods in this respect, especially as to thorough ventilation at night. It ought to be both natural (by windows), and mechanical (by fans).

The carpenter seldom had more than one guest. Sometimes it would be one of those friends who afterwards became identified with him. Sometimes it would be an unknown man, almost a vagrant—a "tramp" as Courtius said—whom he had met upon the mountain road, and whom he could scarcely have seen in the half-darkness of the sunset. Once it was a child, once or twice a dog, once an ape.

Calumnies have been spread about him, but not even the vilest ever said that he was in the least degraded or dissipated in his ways of life, so far as I have read the records. He had, even when quite young, a manner of addressing, and behaving towards women—of every

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degree—which was unique and indescribable. You could not have called it 'young' or 'old' or immature. He seemed not exactly like their son or their father, or their brother but he was never amatory, and of sensuality in any form—even to eating, drinking, oiling, or bathing to excess (there is certainly such a thing) he seemed to know nothing from his own experience. This was what made his infinite understanding and forgiving of the various forms of sensuality in other men and women, so mystical so beautiful.

He was the loveliest being that ever stepped on the surface of the earth. I do not care who reads what I say. I cannot continue in the same strain all the time. The same one thought keeps recurring all the time something like a wheel that runs for ever. He was God. And the poet's words ring in my ears—What if it might be true! He told us he told me myself over the counter that all men even the dirtiest even the lowdest (Alas! said he) even the most cruel (and he bit his lip) even the most respectable—that is smug and comfortable and at home in this world—are like bits of God. 'Little bits or big bits. Oh little bits or big bits' said he.

I do not remember his exact words, for it is

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long ago, and so much concerning his life has come between. But I do remember his look of passionate pity and pride; and yet, was it utter humility? I think it was utter humility when he said something like this: "I am the greatest fragment of all; but even I am not the whole, for what then would become of the other particles?" Or, "I am God, but God is greater than I, and He must contain all of you, like living particles, before He can become complete." I said to him: "Some of us will burn." I did not say anything to chide his assertion of Godhood, for I knew enough even then to make allowances for what a good man is impelled by the Almighty to say in moments of enthusiasm. Now I believe it.

I said to him: "Some of us will burn in everlasting flame. Are these scintillations of God?" His vocabulary was as good as any educated man's, and if his accent was unusual, his voice had beauty. He understood my Latin word "scintillations," and any other ordinary word I used. Some trade terms and my own innovations from ancient esculapian books he guessed at. "We shall burn," he would say—or something like this—"but we shall be healed. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we shall lose nothing. They lost nothing.



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Ye who sin shall lose ooly your sins and it shall not be loss for they shall be made up to you in Light

Many other things of this sort would he say across my shop counter to me and I was seldom shocked for I knew how to make allowance for all sorts of ideas

Most men treat an idea as if it were a living meteorite and dare not touch it unless they have seen it cooled by a soldier with a pail of water Jesus was a Nazarene I knew the sect when I was a little boy for (curiously enough) my father's family and one brother were intimately associated with the sect I saw and talked with many long before I knew that they were not usual and conventional Later when my ideas germinated and when I began to earn my living in the world I turned away from Nazarene ideas but in the person of a young man like Jesus they were attractive and quite beautiful Besides he was not really consistent I suspect, either in this way of life or in certain other particulars

He hated war We often spoke about soldiers, and wondered whether States could be safeguarded without them At least I conceived that he was as much the enquirer and mystified as I myself I suggested to him that

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there were good wars and bad, and that the only thing to decide was whether the war was a just one. He did not say to me—as he is recorded to have said elsewhere, and (I dare say) in another context, “Agree with thine adversary quickly,” as if to imply that whether with good or bad cause we should endeavour to avoid war in individual lives, and perhaps in the national life also. I do not remember what answer he gave to some of my arguments; and in some cases, he offered none at all, but in all cases he listened. When he did speak he could be very eloquent, but he was never envious of anybody else talking. Two or three customers complained of my admitting him into the shop, and two complained in a personal interview with his landlord. Once I had to stop talking with him, and to pretend that Jesus had come to beg for work or bread, whereas he was really talking to me about religion. I headed this paper, “The fool next door,” but the phrase is sarcastic, and I am obliged to conclude abruptly the present section of the narrative—if indeed I am ever allowed time to write more—but I must put that fact on record. Jesus was not a fool; he was in truth as wise and searching in his mind, as he was pitiful, merciful, furious, energetic.

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and gentle in his character I say 'furious' but he had no fury for individual souls except in his most tried and tested moments of mortification. These lasted no time they were not characteristic of him. He was ashamed of them afterwards.

He declared to me that he hated wrong ideas evil wishes evil influences in the world, vile institutions obstacles to the will of his Father. But his Father's will implied the acceptance into life eternal and into his love of every human heart and soul and therefore such were never counted as obstacles to that will such were never counted as evil influences such (Christ declared to me) were never made up of mere evil wishes and evil desires. He acknowledged demoniac possession in some forms but I do not know how far and how literally he believed in it. He denied strenuously that there were human beings moving about in the world who were mere incarnations of the will of the Evil One. He asked me how one could distinguish between such and other men and when I argued the point he retorted that this theory would poison one's whole life, would destroy the equal brotherhood of incarnate souls would make every man suspicious of his neighbour. If it

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was claimed to be based on perceptions which came to individuals with surpassing vividness, he declared that these perceptions were transcendental and therefore as little to be believed (at any rate) as his own conviction that all incarnate souls—"and even," he added, "the unincarnate—so long as they are personal, I pray to God that I may believe"—were inherently good and only accidentally evil.

He declared to me that in every human heart was the long struggle between light and darkness but (he said) it is not eternal, and it is not the fierce, murderous fight, that it is thought to be. He seemed to have a sort of pity for even inanimate things, and for things that are only thoughts. I have read of his agony in the garden, and even in the days of my own acquaintance with him, I saw that he had agonies. But for the most part his dragons were slain without a murderous fight—they were dispelled by the grace of God.

Reformers, I know well, are always called "sentimental." When Jesus said that his view of human beings was transcendental, and so also was mine of some human beings as not truly human at all, I accused him of being sentimental. I was quite good-humoured, but I did use the word rather mischievously, for I

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have had to writhe under it myself I said  
' You argue like an African Your idea seems to be that if the two views are equally unaccountable in logic then you are at liberty to choose the prettier Moreover, I am not sure that it is prettier to believe that human beings are so bad and so ugly as some of the people we see in this very city than it would be to believe in devils incarnate ' It was a curious thing, but he would not allow that anybody was ugly or utterly bad, and yet he did positively acclaim beauty and loveliness of disposition and talent and every sweet quality where others saw them He did not reduce things to one dull level he did not paint all things grey He started in his view of people and things from a level which was not dull and not lowly, and on to this he projected praise and admiration for all that was wonderful but withal, he saw that every soul contains the beautiful and the wonderful, either within its inner or its outer bounds He believed that this difference between the inner and the outer was no disparity, for the soul that was last should be first and the first last, the ones which had not yet completed their full glory, would have this defect of time mystically made up to them at the end of time and all would

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then be seen in their equality. He believed in paradox, and said that equality did not forbid variety.

I have said enough of what he said. What he did was even more wonderful—perhaps it was far more wonderful. But I cannot write it. I am disappointed bitterly in what I have written. I can give no conception of his life or his words which does not seem stiff, colourless, crude, commonplace, unhuman, unreal, and undivine. I will never again, unless divine spirit guides me, attempt to reconstruct the memory of the months in which I saw something of his life. People have asked me: "Was he a Communist? Was he a vegetarian as Porphyry was? Was he a Socialist as Plato was?" Another type of man asks me: "Was he any of these things?" No! He was no "ist"—he was only a Christian. He was the only supreme Christian. He was himself. We can look, and learn by looking in his direction, but we can never reach him.

I cannot endorse this latter belief in the sense in which it is often expressed. I know that Jesus himself would not have approved of this misuse of his divinity. It is taking his name in vain. Far rather would he have had men trying to reach his own ideals, and not content

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(certainly not humbly self-satisfied) until almost every paradox every extravagance of love and service has been tried

And I can scarcely admit that Jesus was a Christian excepting in the sense in which he was a pagan too. He was with the Christians the few of his own generation, he is with the sect now but he was with the heathen too and his spirit will always look first for love. Alas! that I cannot better tell the glory of my father my brother, who is gone and I can never see him, nor speak in his ear nor listen to his living voice!

Alas! that the day may have gone past for ever when I can vindicate the love and grace which inspired his life his every uttered word. His gifts to the poor were nothing. He was poor he chose to be poor but he was rich in power, in joy in beauty and in love.

He was the only man who could dare to be poor and toiling and yet who cared nothing for his own poverty and who forgot his toil for free pleasure. My brother my brothers there is a new spirit the child, the parent the immortal current of Him. My brothers my greybeard fathers listen listen listen! He is coming He is coming.

The blessing of God upon all Amen!

## GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON :

### A LITERARY PORTRAIT (1918).

I mean my portrait of Chesterton to be a careful and truthful one so far as it goes, but there is no idea at all of making it a complete one.

Chesterton is only 44 or 45 years of age, and it is likely that he will write a few works which will be as important as most of what he has already done.

If I were to attempt to emulate his own style, I might say of him : " He may yet brandish some flaming brand across the night, and put to shame the little candles of his earlier years. He may invent some new soap which will out-shine all his criticisms and purge the earth of fools. He may attain to archiepiscopal dignity, and astonish the world with his gaiters, poetically coloured and embroidered with strange flowers. Or he may darken his record with crimson murders, and obscure it with misty suicides over unaccountable bridges. At 45 a



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man may become anything, and anything may become the man. A papal biretta would become Mr Chesterton well. He has been seen dressed as Dr Samuel Johnson, he may (even while we repeat his name) be donning the white tie of Unitarianism or the red robes and peaked black hat of the wild women of ancient Wales! Before he is 50 years old, he may be 50 new men. Before he is a centenarian he may be a centipede or a centurion. That is to say his feet may be in every confusion and his sword in every conquest. He has put his foot into the war he will put his head and heart into the peace."

That is my imitation of Chesterton's style.

In other words Chesterton is not complete and it would be an impertinence to profess to make my portrait of him complete. It will be a sort of verbal kit-cat

*a portrait a little less than half length.*

There appeared a silly pen and ink picture of Chesterton in the *Daily Mirror* or *Sketch* or such and it only contained his boots and the end of his ulster or enormous overcoat, the rest would follow, or had already appeared in an earlier instalment. Jest on this writer's size and personal appearance are so many that no doubt the master of paradox is quite ready to

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begin an essay in which he would explain that he is the thinnest of thin men, and rather small, while, for example, Lord Robert Cecil is far stouter in every way than—his father, the late Lord Salisbury. This, however, is not literary criticism. My sketch of Chesterton will be a rather freehand portrait, less than half length and perhaps it may seem at the end that the feet have been exaggerated, or the head omitted.

I have called him the master of paradox, and that sort of phrase must have been applied to him again and again—and again.

But he is rather the *philosopher* of paradox, or the *high priest* of paradox. Paradox with him is not a mere trick, not even a disease—at least when he began it, and when he is at his best—but a philosophy, and almost a perfect symbol of his whole faith.

*Credo quia impossibile est*: his creed is based on the impossible.

Part of what he has conveyed, or meant to convey, in ten thousand or so paradoxes, is said in simple language by Mr. Gilbert Sadler in two sentences of his fine pamphlet, "The World Religion," namely—

"Science has failed . . . to open up the

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deeper realities and to show to men God and Immortality. Indeed the intellect is not fitted to reach these great facts."

To amplify such words—the most real things in the world may come to us *through* nature and material objects but come from beyond them and are not governed by what we have been taught are the laws of nature. Even the laws of logic are subordinate to a deeper reality perceived by the eye of the mind. Hence the more serious forms of paradox. The cheaper sort of paradox is just an audacious way of saying that some popular view is wrong. The more serious paradox declares that logic is wrong sometimes and that two apparently irreconcilable statements do find their reconciliation somewhere above our brain!

The truth here suggested has been said by a great number of more or less mystical writers by poets by religions since the world began to say anything at all about the needs of the human spirit—that is since the world began to breathe. But Chesterton has carried the idea further applied it in every direction and expressed it with far more humour force, variety, and imagining than almost anyone else I could name.

This is not to say much more than that in

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one respect, he is more a poet than the poets are.

Part of a poet's business is to see that the things of the senses, by which we are surrounded (and the laws which have been derived from them by logic, hitherto) are not the unyielding, overwhelming realities, of which the spirit is a mere product, or a slave, or a Cinderella—a subordinated sister; but that the spirit and its perceptions are the real thing, not the only reality, and not always opposed to the things of the senses (not at all) but more real; and that material facts and experiences are rather, perhaps, the servants, the expressions, and sometimes (to use a prim protestant word) the punishments, of the human spirit. That is one part, I think, of a poet's message, almost any kind of poet, who is great. The other part is that he should have a vivid or delicate impression to give us of this very material world which he (if he is a true poet) knows to be subject—ancillary—to ideas, a *younger brother* of the spirit or mind.

There is also the element of verbal skill, verbal beauty, and melody, in poetry, whether it is rhythmical, as we used to be taught all poetry must be, or just inspired prose. This seems a digression, but the point was that

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Chesterton is in one respect more a poet than the great poets themselves. That is he has enforced upon us more and more the truth of the supreme importance of the things of the soul. If he had also the verbal grace and melody of the poets, in equal degree he would be a great poet as it is he is a prose writer with frequent bursts and gleams of vast power and incidentally a writer of strong poetic verse and, in his love of spiritual paradox he is as great a poet that is a *maker* as any of our time.

Chesterton is not content to make paradoxes about fog and chimneys and umbrellas and politics in the way a less sincere and profound writer might do. He makes paradoxes about God and man about birth and death about heaven and hell and they are true.

It is when he gibes about trivialities or mediocrities such as politics that he is often merely funny a little cheap a little (one does not like to say it) fake and desperately irritating—partly because it is not always quite clear where he is wrong yet you are sure he is wrong if you could get down to sense. When he writes of the deeper things—but does not try to be a systematic philosopher—he nearly always finds gold.

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I take an instance at random out of a book that is, to my thinking, far below his best. It is called "What's Wrong with the World," and was published in 1910, four years before some of us knew there was anything seriously wrong. But apparently Chesterton found that there were many things wrong, and I am inclined to agree with him, though his remedies—as may be supposed—are peculiar in parts, and his diagnosis is original.

Anyhow, in search of a typical epigram of Chesterton, or a saying, I turn to this book and take at haphazard:—

. . . "a difference of creed unites men—so long as it is a clear difference.

"A boundary unites. Many a magnanimous Moslem and chivalrous Crusader must have been much nearer to each other, because they were both dogmatists, than any two homeless agnostics in a pew of Mr. Campbell's chapel. 'I say God is One,' and 'I say God is One but also Three,' that is the beginning of a good quarrelsome, manly friendship."

Now, that is not a specimen of his *best* paradox on spiritual matters; but it is good. (Incidentally, the short sentence—"A boundary unites"—shows the influence of Emerson, one of the very few writers who are visible in Ches-

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terton's style. There is a touch as of Carlyle once or twice (Otherwise he is all originality.)

This quotation means something except the allusion to Mr Campbell whose chapel may have been more real than his church. One has a feeling that reality and Mr Campbell used to be friendly off and on one is sorry if they have parted company.

Take another remark also casually chosen and quite a simple one —

'All true comradeship' has a sort of broad philosophy like the common sky emphasising that we are all under the same cosmic conditions.

We are all in the same boat the winged rock of Mr Herbert Trench.

It is characteristic of Chesterton that he always fastens on a good quotation a good phrase in other authors. He has found a surprisingly deep and glorious phrase in Herbert Trench's strong noble poem 'Apollo and the Seaman' the phrase 'this winged rock' applied to the world, suggesting the need of mutual helpfulness and toleration among the cramped personages flying upon such a precarious voyage.

I do not say that Chesterton's humorous remarks on page 63 of that book. What's

Wrong with the World," are as inspired. It would never do to say so, and I mention the page so that proceedings for prosecution can be taken by the authorities of Letchworth, for he there says of an imaginary politician, a typical reformer—

" . . he is a lean vegetarian with a grey pointed beard and an unnaturally easy smile, . . and he lives in a Garden City, like one forgotten of God."

I lately read a volume of short stories under the general title, "The Innocence of Father Brown." One or two of them pleased me when they appeared in the magazine called "The Story-Teller," but reading them as a bundle in one scarlet-covered book I was a little disappointed. The cover might well be scarlet, for there is a more—or less—stupendous crime in every tale. There are twelve tales, and in only five of these there is no murder—not a bad proportion; but if there is not a murder, there is usually a grim death, or a stolen gem; and in *one* of the tales there are so *many* slain that the average is more than readjusted. That is, the story of a general who fought a battle just to cover up one dead man, whom he had killed, under the bodies of hundreds of men who were killed in the battle.



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The sole purpose of the battle was to hide one unlawful murder under a hundred patriotic ones as you might hide one dead leaf in a forest. Now no one supposes that Chesterton intends Father Brown to be taken very seriously. It is an extravaganza in the style which has leapt up to follow Robert Louis Stevenson's 'The Wrong Box' 'The Dynamiter' and 'The Suicide Club' and the rest of it. These things have their place. But I don't suppose a great genius ever wrote a story of grim wit and preposterous bloodshed without being a little ashamed of it afterwards and it leaves the reader a little ashamed too. One reason for mentioning it is to quote from it, and show that even in his craziest and even in his feeblest pages Chesterton is likely to start singing like a fine lyric poet, or amuse us with warmth of humour or show intellectual power that must command respect.

Quotation is not very effective. It is like writing a diary: one is sure to put in the least important things and omit what really matters.

But here are some words from 'The Innocence of Father Brown' —

Let me first state that Brown was of course a small nervous prelate, rather like the Curate of the 'Private Secretary' who startled all

the ruffians in the story by his marvellous understanding of their sins and plots.

He said that his understanding of sin came to him partly from what he had been told, as a priest, in confession.

"How do you know all this?" one sinner asked Father Brown, "Are you a devil?" "I am a man," answered Father Brown gravely, "and therefore have all devils in my heart."

Now, here is a description of the view, looking from the tower of a Gothic church into the village below it, and the blacksmith's yard, in which (needless to say) a gentleman had been struck dead by a hammer flung from the church tower.—

I think this passage shows the real power of mind of Chesterton, not a mere gift of words or of vivid invention, but a sort of sweep and strength of unerring language that reveals the great brain behind the words, guiding the pen to certain victory.—

Mr. Bohun was the High Church clergyman who, of course, had done the crime, but you don't know that till the end, when Father Brown points it out.

"Father Brown ran not down but up, with the agility of a monkey, and his clear voice

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came from an outer platform above. "Come up here Mr Bohun," he called. "The air will do you good." Bohun followed him, and came out on a kind of stone gallery or balcony outside the building from which one could see the illimitable plain in which their small hill stood wooded away to the purple horizon, and dotted with villages and farms. Clear and square but quite small beneath them was the blacksmith's yard where the inspector still stood taking notes — (that is a Sherlock Holmes touch) — and the corpse still lay like a smashed fly. "Might be a map of the world, mightn't it?" said Father Brown. "Yes," said Bohun very gravely and nodded his head. Immediately beneath and about them the lines of the Gothic building plunged outwards into the void with a sickening swiftness akin to suicide. There is that element of Titan energy in the architecture of the Middle Ages that from whatever aspect it be seen it always seems to be rushing away like the strong back of some maddened horse. This church was hewn out of ancient and silent stone bearded with old fungoids and stained with the nests of birds. And yet when they saw it from below, it sprang like a fountain at the stars and when

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they saw it, as now, from above, it poured like a cararact into a voiceless pit. For these two men on the tower were left alone with the most terrible aspect of the Gothic; the monstrous foreshortening and disproportion, the dizzy perspective, the *glimpses of great things small, and small things great*”—(this describes Chesterton's own style)—“a great topsyturvydom of stone in the mid-air. Details of stone, enormous by their proximity, were relieved against a pattern of fields and farms, pigmy in their distance.

“A carved bird or beast at a corner seemed like some vast walking or flying dragon wasting the pastures and villages below. The whole *atmosphere was dizzy and dangerous*, as if men were upheld in air amid the gyrating wings of colossal genii; and the whole of that old church, as tall and rich as a cathedral, seemed to sit upon the sunlit country like a cloudburst.”—

(Now watch the contrast.)

“I think there is something rather dangerous about standing on these high places even to pray,” said Father Brown, “Heights were made to be looked at, not to be looked from.”

“Do you mean that one may fall over?” asked Wilfred,” (that is, the Reverend Bohun).

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I mean that one's soul may fall if one's body doesn't said the other priest

I scarcely understand you, remarked Bohun indistinctly

That is what I confess I feel about some of Chesterton's powerful paradoxes, 'I scarcely understand Yet, as a student said about a Greek philosopher 'What we understand in him is so good that we are ready to believe that what we don't understand is good also'

It was a Scottish woman who coming back from church was asked if she had understood the preacher's sermon 'Would I have the presumption?' she replied

There is plenty of plain sailing in Chesterton in various books plenty of strong common sense almost commonplace humour clear—if original—reasoning acute criticism but sometimes he seems to lose himself or at least we lose him He floats up like Pyecraft, the stout weightless man in Wells's story and we cannot follow him He seems merely standing on his head or thinking the ceiling is a floor But this is seldom

It appears to me that it is particularly apt to happen when he forsakes the concrete, the land of the palpable of colour—in which he revels—and flowers and cabs and cigars, when

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he floats up and attempts to "do the philosopher," among abstract ideas.

Philosophy, and abstract ideas, are apt to be bad enough, from the most literal, and careful, and humble, servants of plain thinking; but they are rather appalling from a florid figurative genius and humorist.

It is as well at this point to introduce the list of Chesterton's works, so that we may focus his performance as a whole, or—as I proposed—in a rather general way; without dwelling upon the contents of each book.

Born in 1873, he published a book of poetry in 1900; when he was twenty-seven. "The Wild Knight, and other poems."

I have never had that book, but three of the poems are included in a volume called "Poets of Our Day." Here is one:—

### THE HOPE OF THE STREETS.

The still sweet meadows shimmered: and I  
stood

And cursed them, bloom of hedge and bird  
of tree,

And bright and high beyond the hunch-backed  
wood,

The thunder and the splendour of the sea.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

Give back the Babylon where I was born  
The lips that gape give back the hands that  
gripe,  
And noise, and blood and suffocating scorn,  
An eddy of fierce faces—and a hope  
That 'mid those myriad heads one head find  
place  
With brown hair curled like breakers of the  
sea,  
And two eyes set so strangely in the face  
That all things else are nothing suddenly

You probably agree with me that that supports my assertion that with a little more grace and melody a more sublimated use of language, he would be the great poet always supposing also that he got variety of subjects and the right ones

In 1900 also he put forth a book of comic verses 'Greybeards at Play' with his own funny drawings. It was very good but may have owed something to Lewis Carroll and to a writer whom Chesterton admires much Edward Lear not the unhappy king, but the author of the 'Book of Nonsense'

It was with reference to Lear's insane book with its inane pictures or inane book with

insane pictures, whichever you like, that Chesterton wrote :—

“Nonsense and Faith, strange as the conjunction may seem, are the two supreme symbolical assertions of the truth : that to draw out the soul of things with a syllogism is as impossible as to draw out Leviathan with a hook.”

That I consider one of his best sayings, and you notice that it, again, embodies the same doctrine of transcendentalism, or *paradox in excelsis*, which I have already connected with Mr. Sadler's remark about science, and intellect, without intuition.

The rest of the list proceeds as follows :—  
“Various Lives” (1902). I do not know that book—perhaps its contents appeared separately also. “Twelve Types,” 1902 : That is a good one, and shows a less freakish and diffuse style than some of his later works. It has an essay on Charlotte Brontë, an irritating criticism of Tolstoy, a splendid chapter on the Art of Satire, in relation to Pope, in which Chesterton teaches that satirists must be polite, and even respectful, or there is no hope of the satire proving effective.

Pope's high-minded appeal to Addison is Chesterton's ideal :—



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Who would not grieve if such a man there  
be?

Who would not weep if Athens were he? '

Observe how true Chesterton has been to his own standard in this. Read through his works with their violent opinions, their severe strife and see how seldom, if ever, he has struck at any individual ignobly. The men he criticises are the men he admires. He never states anybody's weaknesses or errors without emphasising his merits too (almost never). There is only one man whose merits escape him—probably they were too obvious for a paradoxist to see. Mr Ramsay MacDonald.

The famous appreciation of Browning in the English Men of Letters Series, was published in 1903. It is a model in literary biography as far as avoiding the sin of dulness common to almost all biographies is concerned.

Boswell may not have a dull page but Chesterton has not a dull line. On the other hand of course Boswell is long and the Browning book is short and is largely occupied with literary exposition and half-humorous epigrams.

'The Napoleon of Notting Hill,' came in 1903 an extravagance which can only be des

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cribed, briefly, as Chestertonian. Some sayings in it are very fine, and the imagination is equal to anything—or most things. His volume on G. F. Watts with reproductions of portraits and other paintings, and with his characteristic phrases on the faces and the canvases, is full of power. “The bewildered face of Matthew Arnold” was a good phrase that sticks in my memory.

Chesterton's interpretation of the meaning of “*Ἦος*,” the single unbroken string, the light that is always just going, “and yet illimitably lingers,”—is too long to quote. Read it, or re-read it if you come across the Watts volume; it justifies my view that this man, my subject, is a great writer, or at least a great teacher, a personality in a lofty sense; if not a consummate artist—a powerful painter in words, and with something to say.

The fine “Dickens” appreciation was published in 1906.

“The Club of Queer Trades” in 1905; I did not read it. It is, I gather, like “The Napoleon of Notting Hill,” “The Man who was Thursday,” 1907, and some other fantasias. “The Man who was Thursday” was the first thing I read by G. K. Chesterton, and it intoxicated me. What is it? It is just a mad mass of duels,

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and writhing detectives and old mediæval lanterns and railway trains and false noses (That sort of thing!) There were seven anarchists each had a pseudonym one of the days of the week The Man who was Thursday was about the last to survive after the others had been one by one proved to be detectives with false noses At last he too is exposed the last of the seven detectives all fooled all innocently fooling each other

Heretics (1905) is one of his best efforts "Magic the Play (1913) and Chesterton's History of England published a year or two ago I have not read or seen Nor have I heard Mr Chesterton lecture though the entertaining process has been described to me by eye witnesses and hearers

The Barbarism of Berlin was another red book its vermilion covers indicating another crime, which perhaps disgusted any admirer of G K C in 1914 He is not cut out for a politician or a patriot being honest and you can see from the title that it is not up to the usual sample of his work Even if you held the book upside down it would not be witty But I have got the dates a little out of their order

All Things Considered a very different sort of title and book is one of his collections of

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facetious, poetic essays, or sketches, from the *Daily News* and elsewhere (1908).

"Tremendous Trifles" (1909) is just as good, full of quotable things, a refresher to anyone's literary appetite.

"Orthodoxy" appeared in 1908. Now, "Orthodoxy" is considered, by intellectual people, his greatest work, or his work most nearly great; for, people who think themselves "intellectual"—in the sense of being specially so—are not likely to place Chesterton among the highest of writers. It is a marvellously able and brave Defence of a true Christian faith.

His study of Bernard Shaw came out in 1909, and was duly reviewed by Shaw; and a retort came from Chesterton again in a chapter of "What's Wrong with the World?" He was quite right to fasten upon Shaw's *lack of irresponsibleness*. The difference between the one humorist and the other is great here. Shaw seems not to have an ounce of poetry to spare, and as Chesterton says "has no holidays in his mind." Everything is used actively. If he jokes, he does so for other people's sake, as the boy at the "social evening" was told, by his mother, to dance. Shaw dances for other people's sake. Chesterton performs minuets

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round the room, with lumbering delicacy for the glory of God as he himself might say. It is like a description given somewhere of the poet Browning dancing all alone for no apparent reason.

'The Ball and the Cross,' another wild philosophical romance was of the date 1909 or 1910. As readers of it remember, its title is from the Ball and Cross of St Paul's Cathedral and it emphasises the fact that the cross of the Spirit must surmount the ball of the world. Chesterton says it would be dreadful if the ball were on the top and the cross below—dreadful and impracticable. The work begins in a war that strangely enough seemed very fresh and bold in 1909 with an aeroplane brooding over St Paul's. It ends with the aeroplane flying up—if I remember—over the flames of a burning asylum in which all the really sane—but *supposedly* mad—people of the earth had been confined. The picture of the flames is worthy of Dore or better—of Dickens in his great crowd scenes in 'Barnaby Rudge' or the 'Tale of Two Cities'. The subject is different but the large sweep of the brush the glowing power of fusion, are much the same as in Dickens's best large pictures.

That power of fusion of melting down all

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the ingredients of a landscape, or a scene, or a complicated subject, into one, with, as it were, the heat of one great creative effort of the imagination, is, to my thinking, a supreme test of literary genius. Only the greatest penmen have it in greatest measure. In certain of Arnold Bennett's realistic novels (so-called), such as "These Twain," or in part of that book, you see the opposite, the lack of this power, or act, of fusion. Perhaps he has the power, indeed I am sure Arnold Bennett cannot be altogether without it; but in his array of meticulous details, in his elaborate catalogues of small events, the unity is lost, there is no fusion of the parts. The wood is lost in the trees.\* Now, in Chesterton's description of the fire, in "The Ball and the Cross," detail is not altogether absent, but it is burnt up in the whirling vigour of the author's invention.

Of course, Chesterton's recklessness, his habit of writing just what he likes, helps him in these moments of wild inspiration, where a habitually careful pen would be at fault; it could not

\*Bennett himself defines the contrast in his latest novel "The Roll Call," (1918).—"The sketch was . . . painted in the broad synthetic manner . . . as a natural reaction from the finicking false exactitudes of the previous age." There is no doubt Bennett can be a "synthetic" artist when he likes.

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deliver itself to be agitated by the spirit of energy

In the midst of the flames of great disaster, a little lane of safe land is cloven and down this lane comes the same small old man, the innocent old creature that Chesterton delights in singing a childish song something about 'singing in de golden hay'. The end of this story is symbolic and seems to me one of the truest spiritual fables. It often throws light upon problems in the dark moments of experience. Briefly it is this. The aeroplane is controlled by the Devil and he offers to take several people up with him safe into the sky above all harm. Dangers are many beneath. But when the few passengers are once aloft he asks them a question which is practically this one. Will they be his? Are they so overwhelmed by the dangers of his, that they will consent to escape by saying some little thing to please him? One by one even the worst of the wicked whom he has so far saved refuse and they are tossed down below. When the better man comes to his turn, he also defies the Devil being determined to believe that God cannot be so cruel as to demand such alternatives of him. But if these are the sole alternatives he chooses to fall and end.

So he falls, and Satan flies up alone, in almost pathetic solitude; while—what happens to the falling man, who could not believe such things of God? He falls into bed, and wakes to a pleasant commonplace dear morning in familiar life. Nothing has changed, he has only had a bad dream.

Now, I intended, when I began writing this discourse, to remark upon "Orthodoxy," and to quote a short poem of Chesterton's, on the war; but it is better to end on this note, for "The Ball and the Cross" has been a favourite book of mine; and "Orthodoxy" has not been so. There are many pages in "Orthodoxy" which must tempt one to quote, either in admiration or demur; but my impression of Chesterton has been given sufficiently—excepting for a remark upon two or three later books. Sometimes where he shows greatest force of intelligence, greatest *brilliance*—to use the word so often applied to him, he attracts one less; and seems a shade less perfectly sincere than he ought to be, was meant to be, and very often is.

I might have mentioned "The Defendant," another series, an earlier one, of essays from journals. Chesterton describes himself as "a journalist." He is one, in an honourable



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sense which the word seldom deserves. From *The Defendant* I might cull the saying about the inspired prophets of mankind that they are always hated because they are so fond of other people and the generality of mankind cannot bear being loved so much. So they stone the prophets.

In *Manalive* Chesterton gives us a sort of disordered novel about a man who raced round the world even to far Tibet looking for his wife while she remained at home near the red pillar box in the suburban road as he very well knew. But he said he found her by going round the world.

*The Flying Inn* issued about the beginning of 1914 is similar. He seems to believe in whirling motion, in this case the inn travels. It is the signboard and pointed post of the last inn left in England which sold liquor. The law was that where the signpost stood there a man might drink his beer so the Chestertonian hero rushes all over every where carrying the sign and drives its post into the earth everywhere he chooses to stop and drain his bowl. A curious and to anyone who doesn't know the book a fatuous subject. But it moves, as Galileo said about the planet Earth.

From our author a study of Victorian literature

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ture, which is now only a year or two old, I take a short, amusing quotation. It shows his intensely *personal* habit of mind. He does not talk of the school of Matthew Arnold, nor of even any one book of Matthew Arnold such as "Literature and Dogma," but of Arnold himself. He tries, and commonly succeeds, to extract a sort of literary personality from every writer's works. And with this afterthought I complete the peculiar parcel which I have made out of his writing.—

Chesterton thus sketches three great authors—Newman, Matthew Arnold and Carlyle:—

"If Newman seemed suddenly to fly into a temper, Carlyle seemed never to fly out of one; but Arnold kept a smile of heart-broken forbearance as of a teacher in an idiot school, that was enormously insulting."

What does he stand for? There is, if one goes through all, or a large part of, his writings, a stream of moral conviction that you feel everywhere, that is consistent. What is it? I have hinted that it is this great assertion of the *primary* reality of spirit, the *secondary*—very delightful, or often painful, reality of matter.

The Ball is as large as life, but it is (or ought to be) *below* the Cross.

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He is opposed to false ascetisms, yet he is never really in doubt of the superior importance of the soul he loves life, he enjoys colour food beer, crowds, streets plays and pictures perhaps cockles and winkles, and certainly chocolates from automatic machines

Like other men he must have been less joyful of these recent years the automatic machines have so long been shorn of their chocolate and stand like ghosts of dead delight †

But he has a well of humour and faith in him that let us hope, will not fail him, to the world such things are precious, more precious than the world as a whole always knows

About some subjects like Woman Suffrage and Vegetarianism, he is mistaken Often his assertion of ridiculously unfamiliar half truths is annoying you feel that though he is merely answering the more familiar half truth of conventionality or of commonplace,—he might do it more reasonably, not so provokingly He might be more effective if he gave us the whole truth if possible and not just the other half I say, if possible but that is an important reservation

If you want to get a glimpse of the comic

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genius of Chesterton, finally, turn to his pictorial caricatures in the absurd book "Biography for Beginners." I declare that it is a supreme test of humour, if I understand what humour is. If you enjoy it, you are in some measure a humorist: if not, you may be amused by something else—such as the quips of pierrots, or the unearthly war cartoons of the *Evening News*; but you miss something of enormous value in letters.

What humour is, who can tell?

Nuttall's dictionary has a fine unconventional definition of it, connecting it with pity. It has revealed many things to many men. To Chesterton it has revealed much truth, if indeed, humour be not itself a mixture, in queer proportions, of truth and loving-kindness.

Two sentences from "Heretics" sum up the serious value of paradox.

(1) . . . "paradox simply means a certain defiant joy which belongs to belief."

(2) . . . "All philosophical problems tend to become paradoxical."

## THE CAPITALIST

The man I hated was a type  
The general of an army black  
Who when the growing time is ripe  
Will give us workers our birth right back  
But not a moment sooner

The Capitalist is the man that breaks  
A hundred and fifty stalwart men  
But gradually the world awakes  
And the hundred and fifty rise again  
In the souls of their brothers

Knowledge of what is each man's side  
In the long trench war from year to year,  
The fierce high faith to keenly divide  
The cry that reaches every ear —  
This will deliver us

I hated this one most of all  
Because he happened to be my lot  
My Capitalist my general  
The sunshine on my little plot  
The emblem and the lesson

## THE CAPITALIST.

The father who rack-rented mine,  
The mother's son who bullied my own;  
The boss who called his foremen swine,  
And valued his petty dictophone  
More than me that made him.

I had never a chance to injure him  
And I didn't wish to strike at his head,  
Like men in novels I sometimes skim  
(Though there's very few I have really read)  
I hated his class, though.

I would strike at his class, and if blood should  
flow,  
After this blood-tide out of our veins,  
If there comes a new scenario  
And the workers break and swing their chains  
I hope for a flourish.

Blood is cheap, let us see it gleam !  
You know that glisten on blood in pools?  
I've seen the slaughter of sheep (and dream  
Horribly of it, and poor dead bulls,  
When I sleep badly).

Blood is cheap ; well, ours is dear,  
Or will be when we sell it for life ;  
But if any is shed I'll shed no tear  
For the smear on bayonet or knife,  
If the right side lost it.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

And after the war of nations, next,  
Comes the civil war that has smouldered on,  
The war we Marxians make our text  
That lived before the barons and John,  
And will flare when we know

\* \* \* \* \*

Sentiment is another cheap thing  
And I say no more of my home than this  
It was not a home for a railway king  
And the bottle working crippled my sis  
And father was driven to it

My father like this boss of mine,  
He went a travelling far and away,  
He hadn't a Pullman car with wine  
But he worked his passage to Paraguay,  
And we got one letter

I trace it all to Capitalism  
The greed to have and the money war,  
You don't require much Darwinism  
To see what we've to be thankful for—  
The process is clear

When I began to grow a bit  
And talk with the members at the Club  
I thought myself absolutely it,  
And father differing liked his pub,  
And mother compared us

## THE CAPITALIST.

He didn't go there the less for that :  
She said my brains came from *her* side  
And he rejoined with a tit for tat,  
And presently perhaps she cried  
And that always sickened him.

For my part I looked on at their tiffs  
And rather enjoyed the source of the same ;  
They might have been "winged hippogriffs"  
For anything *I* cared who was to blame.  
I liked to be clever.

"The greed to have and the money-war,"  
I used to invent the phrases at night  
And lay awake till the hooter's roar  
Sometimes feverish with delight,  
Thinking of the Club.

And afterwards when father was gone  
And Sis and I were the props at home  
And mother had us to lean upon  
And I came alive from the cages of chrome  
Where the Canaries\* whistle.

When I came from that works and into this  
Where the lads are like crows with the  
"special ink"

\*Canaries.—The workers in a certain factory which produced chrome were called "the Canaries" because of their yellow faces.



## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

From bottles like those that crippled Sis  
But a chap can get more time to think,  
I excelled myself

And later on when the Club increased  
And we started our propaganda right  
And seemed to get to grips with the beast  
I sat up writing half the night—  
Sometimes no sleep at all

And I borrowed the cost of the ads from Sis  
And paid her half of it very soon  
But she gave it back with a queer wee kiss  
Explaining Saturday afternoon,  
I've got twice that '

And I got the rest as a gift, two quid  
That mother had saved for the very thing  
She said so and I believe she did  
Though about that time I missed her ring  
And I always feared

You never knew a one like her  
It wasn't of any use to refuse  
It wasn't the least good to demur  
In such a case she preferred to lose  
It sounds selfish, but it's so

## THE CAPITALIST.

I'm glad to think I gave her books  
And a red rosette and a chest of tea;  
I believe I got more good from Crookes  
And Shaw and Galsworthy than she;  
But she wasn't uneducated.

And on evenings when she felt her head,  
And Sis was out, or poorly, too,  
I sat and stroked her wrist and read  
A page or so, but very few;  
For she needed quiet.

And the poem and prose of my life are such :  
These dusky evenings at the back  
When love and intelligence were much  
And trivial seemed the chimney-stack  
That hid the Park poplars.

And on nights when I was speaking outside  
(For I often take the stool, like the rest)  
She never showed me she had cried  
Because I had seemed to like that best,  
And she always was awake. . . .

She was up as a rule and warming oats,  
Or stirring the fire, or adding a quilt  
To my bed with my own and father's coats,  
And she'd start and some of the oats be spilt,  
She was so glad. . . .

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

And when I married the foreman's girl  
My best of comrades my helping hand  
She gave my Annie something of pearl  
And I was proud of her, she was grand  
She was loving but proud

That was when we were better off  
And my latest place was waiting for me  
But the money might have prevented her  
*cough*  
For it all resolves into £ s d  
The greed and the money war '

It is years ago and Sis is harsh,  
She never speaks to me and Ann  
It all sinks down to this slimy marsh  
Or "morass" (as they say) from which we  
began  
Poverty Property, Poverty '

And if you sink in the slough and die  
There's no one to hear you, no not one?  
There's a lecturer on the causes why  
Male and female, no end of fun,  
Expert Economists !

## THE CAPITALIST.

They lift a foot or a leg of yours  
Or a finger out of the clinging slough  
And say : " It is only prevention cures ;  
We had better let him go just now.  
We shall save his posterity."

And then this war ; I stuck to my guns  
' Or rather to working this " special ink " ;  
I looked at those posters of mothers and sons,  
And wondered when the men would think.  
The mothers do, more so.

My wife has suffered, though, on the whole,  
For I lost my job when conscription came  
And in order that I should save my soul  
I've dodged around without a name—  
Or with several.

A curse on the greed and the owning class  
They own our bodies, they fling us out  
We bear the lead-storms as they pass  
(And lend our hearts to the game, and  
shout !)  
All in the day's work !

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

I own nothing but these my shanks  
And these my biceps, not so poor,  
But these are pillaged before the banks  
And we don't hear much of prevention and  
cure,  
Except curing Prussianism

War with Prussia ! Behold the war  
A paltry puddle of blood and guns !  
War at home forever war,  
The hunted the hunters the English Huns !  
The Class war for ever !

My wife is finding me food and drink  
Though it's little I drink but papers and tea,  
And since I left the special ink  
She is the source of £ s d  
It all comes to that

We own nothing we are nothing—yet  
Only serfs of war and greed  
The tyrant have us in the net  
The Capitalist makes us bleed  
But later on

## THE ATHEIST.

I hated the atheist, partly because he was an effective speaker. He spoke on Hampstead Heath, on the same feet-rubbed piece of grass where I spoke every Sunday. There were two or three other open-air orators too, with two or three crowds of varying size, close together round one stone landmark. On a notice board close by there is a warning to the effect that speakers must not stray beyond a certain *number of yards from the stone*. This creates congestion, and I think we might have all been better friends if the Heath bye-laws had allowed us a little more space.

But personally I could never have felt great kindness for the atheist, because he seemed to hate my God and my religion. I admit that he expressed his hatred too capably, and that I have sometimes softened towards other atheists, young men with greater earnestness and courage than ability. This man's very cleverness alienated me still more. But I believe in my religion. What I have preached on

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

Hampstead Heath and in little halls as well as to apathetic clusters of idlers in Bethnal Green, has been what I deeply feel to be true

It is a hard thing—very hard and mortifying, when the man with the crowd round him draws away one's audience so ingeniously by the poignancy and eloquence of his speech. It is not only one's vanity that suffers when his audience grows by twos and threes at the expense of one's own. But this atheist had a kind young face. I ought to have been more brotherly to him. I ought to have reasoned with him after our contests, on the way home. I did not go home his way no doubt I lost many opportunities.

The worst sin I committed—and indeed I own it was a sin of deep blackness—was when I listened to a small sallow faced man who came to me as I stood on the Heath.

This man offered to tell me privately a scandal about the atheist preacher. I let him walk home with me. It was difficult to know if what he was saying would be of service to God and Christ. Reader read this with reverence remembering how weak any of us is.

I could not forget what the informant told me. I did not mean to use it but the opportunity came again and again. One day the

## THE ATHEIST

atheist and I publicly wrangled on Heath. It was not a godly sight under the unifying Sun of God. I answered him bitterly, with power, and I then and taunted him with this scandal.

His sister was there listening, a dull, featured girl, but enlightened by her evident affection for him.

He could not reply.

After that he seemed to fade out of the ostensible life of London. The crowds that on Hampstead Heath listened to me sometimes, and to a less objectionable orator than he, a stumbling Socialist who succeeded to his pitch, never heard him there again.

One day I went over to Club Row, where I sometimes hope to do a morning's evangelism among the by-standers at the dog-show, on Sundays, when I am not preaching. There I suddenly saw him die. There was no doubt about it being the young atheist preacher, though he looked older, worn by time and depression.

His face had a beauty of a strange kind. He fell down in a fit, and died almost before I could try to take him home.

I could not remember his right name, and I needed to know that, as well as his address,



## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

before I could have him carried to his home  
But in any case it was too late for that

What is your name? we asked

He did not understand

Jesus Christ ' ' he said

### ALONE

Mr Slider was not absorbed by his wife's conversation. The gramophone seemed to him to be an instrument of vulgar folly, and he could not understand how she could (so he phrased it) harp upon that old box of tricks all breakfast time. If she had ever shown interest in the machine as an invention, he could have talked with her for though he knew little he was inquisitive about machinery. But all that Mrs Slider 'bawled about (so he put it) was the tunes. Could she get French songs on it? Could she get German songs on it? Of course she meant old love songs. Or was it forbidden by the War? He hated all these old sentimental things faded reminiscences of his misguided courtship twenty years ago. She had come to Brighton to dally still more with these old illusions for

## ALONE.

it was at Brighton, twenty years ago, that she had foolishly rejected that nincompoop Rombey, and accepted Mr. Slider, who was 'anything but a nincompoop.

That noodle with the womanish ways and the long hair, and the timid dread of bathing, would have suited her far better than did a shrewd, practical man who had left sentiment nineteen years behind him.

Mr. Slider's eyes wandered from his wife, but her talk wandered on. His ears were drowsily affected; his mouth answered "Yes, yes," "No, no"; but his eyes looked out of the window to where a sad, dark, girl in blue leaned against the rail of the promenade. A seat intercepted his view of her skirt, but the feet were faintly visible beneath, and the narrow shoulders hunched in lonely despair, the wide flapping coat, the soft, desolate-looking hat, fascinated his gaze. People passed behind her; she still gazed out to sea. Nobody else gazed. There was no reason to gaze, except that the poor lass must be deep-drowned in melancholy, in loneliness. What a folly was matrimony, in its usual acceptation, which prevented him from going out to this dark, plaintive, figure and comforting her.

She moved her head slightly, and planted

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

her right arm more dolorously under it. He turned to Mrs. Slider and said, 'Well, dear, let us adjourn,' in his humorously pompous vein, and then his eyes hastened back to their new joy in this sorrow of the lonely girl. She might be middle-aged plain. No, he felt sure from her abandonment of mien, her insensitiveness to the passer-by, her unconventional loneliness and prominence, that she was young and innocent, too young and too innocent to allow anything to stand between her and her grief. She was too sincere to move, too real to think or pose.

She was gazing over towards where France lay.

Perhaps the man was dead. Perhaps poverty, perplexity. Perhaps bullying by coarse-grained landladies, theft, some slight, unharmed inevitable complexity, some youthful incurable grief. Oh God, the griefs that come when one is young! (No one could speak of them.) And when one was getting elderly too!

He rose from the table, and before going to the door, approached the window. Duty might lie out there. Must a man be bound by convention from comforting? He had been dutiful to his wife, too!

## THE DEAD MAN.

As he drew nearer to the glass, he saw the lonely figure turn. The face switched round. Every lineament was revealed. It was the face of Rombey, his wife's first lover.

## THE DEAD MAN.

I met a man along Kentish Town Road last night, who told me that he was dead. I disbelieved this, because he was walking visibly beside me in the bright lamplight, and his face was as round and solid, his eyes were as keen and steady as those of any men we passed. His overcoat, a light summer one, was dingy and a little ragged, but it was substantial enough to convince me that it was made of real cloth. People brushed against him, for he walked heedlessly, lingering to look into shop windows; book-sellers' shops specially allured him. "Look here," I said; "You are not so dead as you say. I can touch you. You can touch me. You jerked me then with your elbow."

"I am really dead," he answered, "and not just dead of soul, or paralysed in spirit, as you

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c.

might imagine. Men in stories and in melo-dramatic moments of real life tell you that they are practically dead that they have lost all interest in life. But I am not like that for I am more absorbed in life than I ever was. Look at that woman's face, for instance! It simply enthral's me.

A young woman appeared at a confectioner's window just then. She was feeling for a particular box of sweets in the window. She had a beautiful face like a typical Irish colleen's with large brown eyes glowing pink cheeks and dark hair. The talkative man, whom I had never met before went on to explain "I am dead in a more real sense than that," he said. "Other people burst out that they are dead—I dare say—when their health is threatened or when they fall down a flight of three steps. But I am dead, because I fell down dead in the Underground Railway at Edgware Road yesterday. Look it up in the newspapers. Perhaps your paper will tell you. Mine it is true does not."

He brought out a crumpled "Star" of the previous evening from his pocket.

I wondered if he had made his escape from a lunatic asylum, or if he had gone mad lately, unobserved and I was perhaps the first to dis-

## THE DEAD MAN.

cover it. "But, Sir," I argued, "What you say is impossible."

"I will explain it," he said firmly. "You have heard of the astral world. Well, in the astral world there is known to be the counterpart of all the objects, all the circumstances and the facts, of our life in the old familiar terrestrial world. There are trees on the earth—there are astral trees on the astral plane. There are lamp-posts and policemen in London; there are astral lamp-posts and astral policemen at the same (or corresponding) corners of Astral London. There are shops in Kentish Town Road in London; there are the same or corresponding shops in the Astral Kentish Town, which is in Astral London. It is the land of the dead. I am dead.

"Yesterday I was in what is thought to be the more concrete Kentish Town, what is called (misleadingly) the "real" Kentish Town, afar, beyond the veil of death. To-night, I am here in the Astral Kentish Town. It is very much the same. The people are all very much the same. But they are not doing the same things. Indeed, I cannot feel that they are exactly the same people. There seems a flaw in the argument, though I cannot clearly understand it. I know that there is one woman;

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

an old woman—a woman I was fond of, whom I lived with who seems happy here to-right in Astral Kentish Town I left her at home to-night

But I know that really '—he sighed—she is miserable, overwhelmed, in terrestrial Kentish Town at the same address in a small street because there you see, my body was brought home yesterday evening in the ambulance

'Your mother?' I asked

'My old aunt who has been a good mother to me It is sad—though here as I say, she looks happy and is working about the flat as usual'

A little later he suddenly hailed an omnibus and we parted without speaking more Except that as he jumped on to the footboard I said, 'God bless you!'

## THE VANISHED HOUND.

Not "the Hound of the Baskervilles," nor yet that truer mystery, "the Hound of Heaven."

The animal I name was flesh and blood, unlike Francis Thompson's terrible symbol, and she was also beauty—unlike Conan Doyle's bittern-like boomer. She was not, I suppose, a pure-bred greyhound, for it is noticeable that the dogs one cares for are apt to be cross-bred or composite beings; and we cared for this dog. She leapt our little gate as no other athlete could. No effort, no recoiling to spring. She would, as it were, drop over a gate, fly or float over a wide ditch. Is she dead? That is what I do not know, nor why she vanished, but I shall write my guesses if anyone will listen to them. There is no doubt one has to go warily in "interfering" between a neighbour and his animal, be it dog, cat, dove, or horse; and therefore I shall substitute the name "Dunstable" for Dunoon where this happened, and



## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

the name 'Johnsoo' for Thomson the real man beyond my hedge

Johnson's beautiful hound came into my garden and she gave birth to seven puppies there under the hedge, in a little nest she discovered, and I never saw such happiness between a fleet hound and an attemptingly swift puppy

Johnson claimed all the young ones and took them away rather too soon and the law of the case—or the rights of the case—were not clear enough in my mind, so I did not resist him. It was later that one puppy and the hound mother played. The eyes of that hound, a happy but irresponsible mother, were almost on my knee as I write or her long delicate nose on the shiny table inquiring after cheese and biscuits. She was a great deal of a communist about food and took anything from anybody who was not watching but it was pure principle or innocence and she would have shared anything of her own if I had wished it bones and such. She was not a vegetarian, despite my intention to teach, but she did have a queer look of shame after she had been hunting with her prior owner. I suppose I never became her owner, though I made a new name for her, 'Shadow' and I have no right at all to ask for her now, and I cannot find out where she

## THE VANISHED HOUND.

went away last January. It is possible that I am sentimental about it, and that if I had real affection for the beast I should know intuitively whether she were dead or not. But I only know that Johnson's dog-licence became due, and I had not bought the dog, and Johnson's work as a boat-hirer is slack in these times, and he went down to the shore with his hound, in the evening, and I had no suspicion that she would not follow him back. She vanished. Whether she was sold to a Glasgow dealer, whether she joined the "Choir Invisible" of those that are needed for Army research to test if an elephant can convey elephantiasis to a rat (*via* a dog), I can only guess. Johnson tells me nothing, and resents suspicion.

"It may be that the gulfs will wash her down,  
It may be she will touch the Happy Isles."

## OXFORD MEAT MARKET

I sing of Oxford not of thoughtful Thyrsis  
Nor Scholar Gipsy strolling on the wold  
I could not copy Arnold's lovely verses  
Nor share his love of Oxford bought and  
sold

Oxford that once long since was sweet and  
needed

And fruitful and with faith and healing fire  
Unarrogant—that humbly, gladly heeded

The call of hope and pity and desire  
Such Oxford may in distant days have been  
But such is not the Oxford that I mean

I sing of Oxford adipose and brutal

Serene in smug contempt and trivial ease  
Whose leaders and professors gravely foolle  
And smile on man and God and love their  
feet,

And fear nothing and hope nothing and be-  
lieve nothing—

A life that only gods or fools can live

## OXFORD MEAT MARKET.

And spend their measured time cramping or  
soothing

The Youth that snobbish parents haste to  
give.

This is the Oxford on whose learned street  
I stand and watch the purchasing of meat.

Not your, professors, O not yours, ye scholars !  
Are you your brothers' keepers? What concern

Can you have with this butcher chap who  
hollers

Some watchword different from what you  
learn?

Can you avail, when Christian people jostle  
Along the rows of slain and tortured sheep?

O trouble not the mammoth in his fossil !

O fret not the grammarian in his sleep !

Alas ! 'tis no lone hero dead for words,  
But cowards clustering to drowse in herds.

Cowards, I challenge, feebly, not I only ;

But the long-dying Spirit of Truth as well ;

You ought to have endured to suffer lonely

And conquer, or go conquered into hell,

For these your brothers, these the beasts and  
others,

These that have suffered, these you made to  
sin.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c.

What use the petty spark of truth that smothers  
The stars above the heart of love within?  
The Oxford of this time had better bled  
Than these small helpless, and indecent dead  
The Oxford of so venturesome a dawning—  
So pale and tentative and yet a dawn—  
Has truer duties than this frown and yawning  
Over a leathern book on cloustered lawn  
Among the palaces of spires aspiring  
And pious moulderings and sculptured walls  
The Oxford of true duties would be firing  
Its threats and crying forth until it falls  
Knowing all leathern books are trash as mud  
Till won and washed with sacrificial blood  
Your own blood and mine my blood, not this  
sister's  
Thus mocked and naked in the lovely sun  
The same sun that redeems your parks and  
blisters  
The thread old walls whereon the ivies run,  
The same sun staining that white crucifix  
telling  
In the sweet fragrant churches how you cried  
For His your Saviour's slaughter, not with  
yelling  
But with a silent smile when these dead  
died

## OXFORD MEAT MARKET.

You called for Christ to die to ease your life,  
And yet the Lamb "forgives the butcher's  
knife."

The Lamb forgives; not I, as yet, my brothers;  
My fathers; know and tell that Truth will  
live;

Your dust of cosy fires of vigil smothers  
Small embers, not the Sun that can forgive.  
The morning will forgive when, proud and  
humble,

Proud of humane commissions, using lore,  
Oxford, not fearing though her towers should  
tumble,  
Will ring loud bells of love through Eng-  
land's core.

That Oxford in a greater time will be,  
But that is not the Oxford that we see.

## A BLESSING WI THE LAVE

The problem of the humane treatment of 'garden pests' is one which this year [1917] must have confronted many humanitarians for the first time. People have gone on to 'the land' who hitherto had no vivid experience of the multitude of insect lives violently destroyed by the spade and the hoe. The writer of these few words upon this subject has been a member of the Humanitarian League and a vegetarian for some years but he had never realised clearly what a large and pressing problem this is until he was guided by a benign tribunal to serve his country, in the midst of its own dust and mud. In the course of 'work of national importance' one slashes sharply across the mystery of insectile and vermicular pun. Do insects and worms feel? Do they feel pain, acute pain, agony? This uncomfortable thought smites the heart of the would be humane husbandman as he stoops to watch the small worm twisting itself into a strangely stiff loop, spasmodically twisting and untwisting as if it were

## “ A BLESSING WI’ THE LAVE. ”

trying to swim on the surface of the soil. Has this worm no prior acquaintance with air? Does it think this is the “water” of which its grandparents talked? Or is it writhing in intense pain because of a blow on the head or body? It is well to regard these questions without too much attention to the twistings of another species of beings, the “experts” in natural history. Probably such persons would sagely smile or frown at the reference to grandparents, and would volunteer information as to the lack of a developed nervous system in the worm: the worm having no nervous system “as we know it” cannot feel what we mean by pain. Of course, it would be desperately upsetting if some future scientist came along and proved that what is called a nervous system “as we know it” is unnecessary to the experience of pain. Scientific, like other reasoning, so often depends upon premises which deserve the attention of a philosophical Inspector of Housing.

By the way, the word “experts” does not here mean the men who really know most about natural history, men often open to every theory; it means the men who are most dogmatic, a different thing. Going on to the land,



## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

one soon shrewdly guesses that the 'expert' in agriculture like the expert in natural history, law or anything else, may know a lot of things, but is pretty certain not to know his own business. Anybody who comes to the expert's job with a fair attentive, and individual intelligence is likely to find out more of the realities of the matter than does any 'expert'. This applies to theology vegetable culture and—as stated—to the problems of pain in the lower species of animal life. Stand and watch a worm. Watch it gliding over the surface of a rainy road see it prying feeling swiftly seeking for the door in the wall of mud or wet pebbles. It does not waste time over the one spot—its keen nose sails onwards but it is infinitely patient every movement suggests intelligence akin to ours every subtle curve expresses the same—or similar—anxieties concerns ingenuity and perplexity and purpose. Attention efficiency the same sort of soul in a superficially different body it is wonderful how little one notices the difference when one has watched for a few minutes the magic sameness. It is as if the soul of the worm like man's soul hovered over and around in front of or behind the body and were suggested to an observer by the body's

## “ A BLESSING WI’ THE LAVE. ”

movements much as an orator's gesture may hint his thoughts, his coming words. Automata? No nervous system? It may be science, but it does not look like common sense. “ No more does the rotundity of the earth, or earth's motion round the sun,” says the wise man. True enough ; one need not imagine that some later wise men will upset these terrestrial dogmas ; but, on the other hand, how does the scientist know that the man next door has an aorta or a valved heart? Simply by the likeness between that man next door and other men whose frames have been examined, perhaps by other scientists. The man beyond the *hedge stands up, and walks, and smokes*, like those other human structures who had hearts and arteries ; comparatively few of the whole human race, it is certain, have been submitted to close examination of this kind. But the scientist is satisfied. The man of ordinary sense who has watched various kinds of worms and insects is satisfied, too ; his mind is satisfied that the probabilities are all in favour of these creatures feeling some pain akin to ours, just as they appear to feel social sympathies, respect, anxieties and reliefs akin to ours. His heart is not satisfied that he has solved the

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

problem of man's treatment of these curious cousins

At the head of this short note a phrase from Burns's 'Address to the Mouse' is quoted. Sometimes the phrase cheers a sympathetic (or is it "sentimental"?) market gardener, as he marvels resentfully at the hundred of disturbed worms under the sliced surface of his weedy turnip patch.

It would be rather good, wouldn't it? if these clever vegetarian farmers who suggest to us that insect pests are largely due to the use of animal manures, and other unnatural stimulants for the earth could prove also that every worm spared every beetle upon whom the hoe's hunnish air raid had mercy is a profit and blessing to the land. It may be so. Even in that case it would be difficult to spare them, while, at the same time, destroying the weeds which (despite Samuel Butler's reasoning) are evidently of a different race. Quite likely a more constructive philosophy of the future will teach us to prevent weeds instead of curing them, but at present it seems enough to say that they look different, that they do not seem to suffer, whereas worms and beetles do, although most likely some useless and detri-

## “ A BLESSING WI’ THE LAVE. ”

mental destruction of weeds, too, is often done.

No doubt, the thinker of such thoughts will be advised to cultivate “the saving grace of humour.” But while one can appreciate the fun of Samuel Butler’s vegetarian satires, and the “dearest of distillations” of golden humour in Robert Burns’s purest poems, one may feel reassured and go on with one’s cogitations about the worm—and even the weed, observing that it is not specially witty to confuse those two different forms of life. Incidentally, it might not be absurd to surmise that, in a world governed by material and spiritual laws profoundly interwoven and never satisfactorily explained, there *may* be a law that kind deeds are followed by some sort of compensation to the doer. Does it matter what sort? One sort is almost as marvellous as another. The laws of causation are very interesting, and they were not all revealed by even the great brain of David Hume, or the little brains of contented specialists and inventors of words as long as any worm: It would not seem so ludicrously strange if the man who spared the worm and the beetle (uncommonly like citizens terrified by a bombardment from above)—at least as often as without ceaseless effort he *could* spare

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

them—received a blessing upon his green things his corn or his flowers which blessing proceeded quite simply and quietly out of the kindness in his heart

' I doutna whiles but thou may thieve  
What then? Puir beastie thou maun live !  
A daimen icker in a thrave  
    S a sma request  
I'll get a blessing wi' the lave  
And never miss t

### THREE SONNETS.

COLERIDGE'S ROOM, 3, THE GROVE,  
HIGHGATE

O mellow spirit, like the haloed moon  
On which I lookéd out, so yellow-bright.  
If but a Christmas glance, a sheen of light,  
A calm entrancement, seasonable boon,—  
If but a tithe from thy inviolate force,  
Not hurting thee or me, but both the same,  
To-night from out the heaven of loving  
came,

The azure home of heaven, to my remorse :  
O great and mighty Coleridge, gentle soul !  
I would not use too vainly thy control.

I would not wrong the world, whose living  
death

Is much the meed of individual breath ;  
I would not wrong my dark-haired, loving  
bride,  
So sleeping, innocently, at my side.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c.

To day we stood thy solemn room within,  
Thy deep and solemn room Oh, nevermore  
May we forget that glimpse of godly lore  
That moment when we seemed the truth to  
win

A gazing through thy window as through sin  
Or wrong or weakness conquered to the  
sky

O, the red embers of the cloud on high  
The long sad message did not life begin?  
Did not this life already lit by love,

Take on a truer colour dim and deep,  
O Coleridge didst thou watch thy walls above  
And waken us like slumberers from sleep?  
O Partner Friend and Lover, may I keep  
The truth for thee on which his light did  
move!

Another poet in the poet's room!

A pair of poets one—myself—so dull  
But both enlisted by the beautiful  
And having felt a poet's lofty doom  
It is not a mere thread for fancy's loom,  
It blew not through that window open full  
I ask that humbly hopefully we cull  
The thoughts of life and death till bright they  
bloom

### THREE SONNETS.

O gentle, mighty poet, leave we here  
Our wrongs, our woes, to vanish o'er that  
grove :  
Leave we a little of our scorn and fear,  
Pass we more thoughtfully to power above ;  
Help us to be to one another dear,  
And thou wilt brighten with our brighter  
love.

---

### FORGERY.

Only for eight pounds,  
The dark thin man was gaoled ;  
Only on these grounds—  
That his wise hand had failed.  
He traced the shapes on a note (not gold)  
“Ten” and “shillings” and stamp,  
To keep himself and me from cold  
And the baby and me from the damp.

I sat up in the dark  
While he went on his rounds ;  
Begging out in the Park,  
Only for eight pounds :  
Beg for a sixpence long enough,  
Or a place where his hand might serve ;  
But beg at all?—he wasn't tough,  
He hadn't got the nerve.



## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

Now it's 'seven years'

And what becomes of me?

For the thin dark man was my dear of dears—

Two in trouble were we!

He kept the baby and me from want,

In spite of the King's bloodhounds

And the baby would have been blessed at the  
font—

Only for eight pounds!

Note This is an actual item from a news paper of 1917  
The long r traced about sixteen 10s notes with red ink  
very skillfully

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### AN EPITAPH

No one knows the sorrows of the world

Deep in darkness they are hid

Over them the little passions ply,

And the ear hears and the eye lid lids the eye

Down below sex and self, strife and peace,

Live the true secrets loving without cease

And hating without reason in our world

## THE PRIME MINISTER'S GRUEL.

“When the lamp is shattered—” It is years,  
Ten years, since last I read that matchless  
line.

I turn the pages of this book of tears,  
Remembering when first I made them mine.  
Shelley? Ah, Shelley and love are long  
ago,  
Before this noisy time’s prosaic flow.

I sit here by the fire and sip my fate—  
To wit, warm gruel and cold indolence,  
And, for a month, some papers call me  
“great”

And then my very bones are hurried hence.  
The three score years and ten may be my  
age,  
And then—the trivial pen, the empty  
page!

Well, well! I snuggle, being out of noise;  
The cosy glow, the lonely room, are good.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

I recall at school, I left the other boys  
And often sought some lucky nook to  
brood

Or rather it was something more than  
that—

The harassed ark was sick for Ararat

I then would say I am myself myself "

Nothing could break my unity, as it were  
I still can see that broad, grass mantled shell  
Amid the river bank in summer air

In such a place or in a lonely shed  
I breathed alone, and so was comforted

Thus is it now—when after all these talks,  
Ten years of talk unmixed—not *merum sal*,  
And thirty mixed with sport with legal hawks,  
And laughter with the clubbings in Pall Mall  
And reading books and music with one's  
wife

This is the composition of my life—

After it all I sit here in my rug  
And sip the fate and gruel of the old  
And yet I give a comfortable shrug  
Enjoying being warm when life is cold  
Life and the weather both are harsh and  
crude'

Yet here am I in jolly solitude

## THE PRIME MINISTER'S GRUEL.

Shelley? I turned the pages, and each word  
Had new interpretations as we passed.  
Either my brain is sleepy, or some slurred  
Forgotten beauty has come back at last.  
Perhaps 'twas Bessie's eyes, before she  
went,  
That gave the lovely verse a new content.

Some books that I take up in leisure now  
Remind me of my youth and Bessie young;  
Her pool-brown eyes, her subtly darkened  
brow,  
Her hair, her lips, the fools she moved  
among;  
The life we might have led, our tears and  
strife  
When faced with the complexity of life.

An old man maunders over other years,  
And we have "Watcher's" word that I am  
frail;  
"Our frail but venerable chief"—(one fears  
I may find might to fight the "Morning  
Mail.")  
Yes, yes. . . No, no; I'd better settle down,  
Discard my mail and love my dressing-  
gown.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c.

To night I am but a name ' Prime Minister ' -

To morrow that last leaf of autumn goes  
A month ago the power was gone—that cur  
Who bites at wounded men he knows he  
knows

My God for all such dastards!—but it's  
late

For anger and I'm weak and out of date

It is not that I lost an office fraught

With every pain and gains a trifle small  
That is not why that beast distorts my thought  
That is not why I curse him—not at all  
It is because I sold so many things  
And lost upon it through his bludgeonings

I sold—Shelley and Morris and Christ and  
Heaven,

And my dear Bessie's eyes and Alice and  
Mother

I sold the very seeds of learning given

At Oxford and my love for a common  
brother,

A man in dirt and rags who came for tea  
One day you know and left his message  
for me

## THE PRIME MINISTER'S GRUEL.

Forty years. Forty years. So short is life.

So little could have been—that little missed,  
Years of lying (no, no !), and hope, and strife,  
And parley with Pacifist and Capitalist,

Years of strength, and now no strength at  
all,

And a depth of meaning in death and  
Shelley's call.

These men that died for me, and for the world,  
Their life, like mine, was short, and what is  
breath?

Surely a young life in its glory hurled  
Against the points of heaven, is not for death,  
The stars are bayonets, the planets shards;  
Surely beyond the night are bright  
rewards?

He giveth his beloved sleep, and me—  
Who may not quite be loved (my sin is deep)  
He giveth (I believe that this will be)  
A fireside fitful slumber, if not sleep;  
And granteth me, like other squandered  
men  
Beyond the night—to read—my books  
again.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

I stared at a notice bill in a dark street  
A night—some weeks ago      Removed to  
—where?  
To midnight and frustration, and defeat?  
To penitence, and impotent despair?  
Oh no good night dear Jesus—let me  
wake  
And read my school boy      studies \*—for  
thy sake

*December 1916*

Studies at the Prime Minister's old school meant  
pieces of prose and verse

Watcher was a verse pseudonymous writer in the  
Morning Mail

The last stanza is dreamy Perhaps it was his own  
notice-bill

## PROXIES.

1. Marie Bridge Lowe was the wife of W. Bridge Lowe, LL.D., but she was not his love. She did not like the dull silver neck-ties he wore, nor the black ones with the little white corpuscles all over them, nor his sober style in soft hats, nor his heavy horn-handled cane, which always looked like an umbrella. She did not exactly hate—but no more did she exactly tolerate—the severe scraping that his *triple chin* gave her as he kissed her tiny smooth one, once in the morning at nine, and once in the evening at ten.

She had married him partly because he asked her, and Jack Duke was then unknown to her, partly because his head was the same shape as her father's at the back, partly because he was obviously lonely and in search of something—he little knew what. Chiefly, she imagined, because he could take her away from school-mistressing, and help her to publish her three little books on art—in the Wellman Series (7d. paper, and 1s 10d. leather).



## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

But he was, sometimes her proxy—or rather Jack Duke's proxy, by which—as it seemed—Jack Duke communicated with her without either man knowing it, while the physical form of Jack Duke, having appeared on her horizon and conquered was now exiled by that manly man's own will or effort and sat in a café or wrote football news in a wretched newspaper office somewhere near the River Plate.

Dr Bridge Lowe was his wife's proxy for Jack and as the chilly kiss came and the ample moustache tickled irritatingly, she accepted the kiss as Jack's kiss and returned it as if to Jack. So she was enabled to go on living—at least it was called living.

2 Willie Bridge Lowe as he used to be named at the little Strestham school with the flat wall was certainly fatter than he had ever intended to become when he did the Blondin on the flat wall forty years ago, but he was not utterly dead to romance. It would be a mistake to assume that the LL.D. necessarily is. Only, as it happened his wife was not his passion—if indeed passion is the correct word to use of an elderly man's long latent feeling. Ten years before he took Marie away from the school mistressing he had loved another school mistress whose name he prayed

## PROXIES.

that he might never say in his sleep, and never read in any newspaper or letter, whose face he half-hoped, half-feared to see, sometimes, at corners of crowded streets, or in the lonely lanes of Hampstead : though he would perhaps have failed to know the face, if he had seen it in these days, for it was quite changed. He was not altogether sure that he did not love his wife, Custom will make any useful thing almost cherishable. He had certainly been sorry for her, and had admired her red hair, when he first saw her teaching.

He had been an inspector then, more from interest in education than from need of the post, and in his vocabulary she was Chrysorodea, the golden rose-tree, because he saw a hue in her hair that he loved. But he had always wished her profile were like Jane Arch's, strong yet delightfully delicate, with character but without aggressiveness, with—well, with perfect womanhood. When he kissed Marie once at nine and once at ten, he thought of Jane, and hoped he might not dream too painfully of her, and regretted vainly the fate that had forbidden him to propose to her, and the sweet reserve which had forbidden her to propose to him. In Marie he found the proxy of Jane. Later his daughter Mary eclipsed both.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

3 Ole Jack Duke was the seldom sober sports editor of the La Plata Herald and his articles were said to be ten times better when he was really drunk than when he was only half seas over. He had sixteen athletic subjects at his fingers ends not to mention billiards and jujitsu. He could write with his eyes shut. His neat sensational caricatures of all the local cricketers and oarsmen were all the funnier for the quivering little lines at the sides which sometimes gave him away to the critics who knew his inspiration. Jack naps they would say. Ole melancholy Jaquizee you have been overdoing the Scotch again! Whiskey at night makes the pen bite. Whiskey ad lib makes the nib pb! And so on. Ole Jack Duke had been a respectable man a manly man. He had loved the wrong girl—that was all. He had first met her after she was married to Dr W Bridge Lowe and being an honest simple fellow Jack had gone away. His nose was not what it was and his eyes were not as keen and clear as formerly and his strong athlete's hand and slim wrists were not so graceful as they had been on the LL D's tennis lawn. But he was a perfect demon for work and he had his proxy for Marie—whose hair he alone of all men could

## PROXIES.

rightly describe. It was not red : and he knew no Greek polysyllable for it : but he knew it had been the colour of whiskey, of Highland Talisker whiskey, and he had the proxy for it and Marie, behind the boxing-gloves in his locker at the beastly lodgings under the hot roof. He did not think of Marie as he drank. As one bottle followed another into the wastepaper basket, and went empty away, and as new, plump, golden bottles, waiting for the corkscrew, arrived, he was beginning to forget all about Marie Bridge Lowe.

4. Jane Arch never married, but she went into the slums of Shoreditch, and there lived as an unofficial nurse. She said that it was much easier when you were unofficial, than when you were hampered by all sorts of rules.

She had a fine, but not now exactly delicate profile, with pendulous noble nose and ascetic lips. Her hair was slight and white. She gave herself to the poor. Everyone said she must have had a sad romance once, but then they were wrong. For Jane had never quite loved Willie Bridge Lowe, yet she would have loved him if he had let himself go, and courted her. She was beginning to be very interested in his thick, manly neck, and frank eyes, and

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she liked his ready blush too. But he seemed to sheer off just as he was beginning to reveal himself to her gentle intelligent eyes. Once or twice Jane had remembered the lines in

Maud Muller about the Judge and connected the thought with Willie Bridge Low. But she never consciously loved him even when he had been kind to her and taken her part against the master Rackett at the remote exam—more than fifteen years ago—the Social Essay Exam. She little realised that the same poem 'Maud Muller,' was often in Dr Bridge Low's mind especially on Sundays—when he had time to think and read leisurely sentimental things. Neither of them thought the poem was really very like their own relation—or past relation for they had not seen one another's very names for years. Jane avoided the scholastic journals in which Bridge Low on Froebel was sometimes quoted. The last time she had read of him was at the Dickens Centenary, when he gave a solemn paper on Dick Swiveller's streets. She had laughed, and had thought to herself that she would never have laughed had she really loved him. She knew he was married and did not regret it. 'He was a dependent sort of man,' she reflected. Meantime Jane Arch continued her

## PROXIES.

good work, and nearly every police-court in East London knew her efforts for the discharged, especially the young. She waited at the prison gates, and gave the queer lads, men, girls (not always looking quite like girls) and unhappy women what food and what money she was able to afford. She was anything but rich, but she lived on about nothing; and friendly philanthropists helped her.

She led a saint's life. Yet even she, not knowing it, had her proxy for the man who might have helped her in this or some other worthy work. She drank great quantities of strong tea. "Tea like a tan-yard at every meal, Miss Arch," the hyperbolical local doctor said, imitating the bluff manner he had seen in some novel of slum life and medical manhood. "Tea as full of dangerous tannin as a tan-yard, I tell you, at every blessed meal (I believe) every day!"

Perhaps it was the tea that made Jane dream once that in heaven people were married more fittingly than here, yet nobody was sore and nobody jealous. In fact, in heaven they were all married, and yet they were not married. But all round heaven was a gentle ring of gold.



## THE MAN UNDER THE CAR

It happened thus it seemed so small  
I walked along the lamp lit street  
And thought of nothing big at all  
Only that night and life were sweet  
I turned the corner close to the car  
And then—well here we are !

The car fell—they say—I m told—  
The car going at double speed  
Fell with a smash and I was rolled  
Under it smashed and *dead* indeed  
But dead or not I m walking here  
And hope to talk to you my dear

## CHRISTMAS 1917

A poor thing is my body  
Which falls from passion to this  
And all about me are clouds bloody  
That feel not hopeful kiss  
The wind the breeze the breath?  
Death damned death !

## CHRISTMAS 1917.

Behold the world of heaven—  
Men and women that lie  
Deep in the fogs of the unforgiven  
Under the same sky.  
Change, hope, release?  
Curse of war, curse of peace.

If peace shall come, good singer,  
It shall be worse than night;  
Endless cloud shall be its bringer,  
Endless despair its light.  
Watchman, watchman, see you hell?  
“All’s well, all will be well!”

### THE GREAT MAN AND THE LOW MAN

The Great Man seized the Low Man  
And bound him in his cell;  
But the Low Man’s soul was there made whole,  
And the quiet loved him well.

The Great Man looked at the Low Man,  
And bade his beard to grow,  
And the rough hair choke his mouth that  
spoke;  
But his eyes spoke better so.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

The Great Man clipped the Low Man—  
His poll as bare as an egg  
Go on thy knees thou bald Chinese !  
But he did not bow or beg

The Great Man spat on the Low Man  
By a hireling's hideous snout  
And struck his head till the good brain bled  
But the soul did not run out

The Great Man tired the Low Man  
And starved and told him lies  
He bowed and quailed his memory failed  
The danger left his eyes

The Great Man buried the Low Man  
Under his garden tree  
*And a weed came up with this thought in its  
cup*  
You cannot now be he

[After reading in Theodore Price's book "Crucifiers and Crucified" The thought in the last line : that personal identity is not so separate as it seems. I can become any thing that I truly love and value. The punishment of the Great Man was that he could never again see—or be—what he so hated.]

## UNDER US.

Without me, they shall bow down under the prisoners,  
they shall fall under the slain —Isaiah X, 4

Under us they shall fall; it matters not what  
the old text saith :

Under us, under all, the patient prisoners and  
the done to death.

Under us, O priests, with your false incanta-  
tions cowering,

Us and us, who "went down in our youth's  
beautiful flowering."

Our gore is on your heads, masters, and  
leaders, and sages;

It sinks and it spreads, it is swollen with the  
slain of ages.

You statesmen, you marshals of men, you  
kings, who partake of it,

Swim, drink, and gasp again; your thirst shall  
not slake of it.

It is over you, it is around you, the flood from  
gates of prison fell,

And that flood, confluent, of blood, they are  
made one red and radiant river of hell.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

Without Him whom all scorned then all s  
lost lost and in vain

Under the unclaimed, and the unmourned and  
the prisoners and the shun

*24th December 1917*

## UNDER THE OTHERS

The smell of blood is salt in my mouth—

As salt as the sea around

But it is not the sea of the sunny south

It is the sea of ground

It is the bay of the clods of clay

And the channel where horses\* roll

And the whole mass quakes as a new weight  
takes

Its place on the top of my soul

Under the others—all brothers !

(Far too many and far too deep)

Till the thick night fall over us all

And then my soul may sleep

Goodnight Evvie dear !

O England far sweet towns of Grey !

I see the red window sills

I see the place where the flowerbox lay

And the tops of the muslin frills

## UNDER THE OTHERS.

And I say, here lying and dying—

‘O, England, I’m your lad.”

It may have been good to save the brood,

But if not to save it’s bad.

It’s bad to lie and die,

Under the others, all brothers!

Far too many, and far too heavy,

And far from Evvie.

. . . Goodnight, Evvie dear!

(\*NOTE horses This was an early War-poem)

## GOD’S FOE.

My enemy lay ill and dying

Nor only mine, but the foe of God.

On the street the sycophant straw was lying,

In the hall three Doctors, mincing, trod;

The Council stilled the tramway wheels

For fear he should think it dead-men’s squeals.

I prayed that he would die, for dying

He seemed to be, I could not know.

I saw him on his sick bed lying

Dim in the darkened light, God’s foe.

His face, so horrible of grimace—

God’s foe, with something like God’s face!

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

This is blasphemy this dire man  
Fell like a foul bird beak and claws  
Tore and clung but with ruse and plan  
To the people murdering them with laws  
This foul thing on the bed divine?  
Ah no, his face had changed to mine !

God's foe my foe ! Take this and that—  
This stab this curse be you God or I  
I would rather have it if God begat  
Or I such deeds as shame the sky  
Take your death I go down to your den !  
The face was changed to the foe again  
And he died the foe of men !

If you are willing to die as the foe  
With ' the death of God and eternal woe  
For the sake of man it need not be so  
The fault that was yours (and God's) will go !

## THE BOURGEOIS SOCIALIST.

You have stooped and striven  
In the heat of the summer;  
You have hacked and riven  
With hands cracked and cold;  
You were homeward driven  
In the dark of winter,  
Growing old.

You have fought the malice  
In the eyes of the agents;  
From your own eyes sallies  
The hate of your heart;  
You wait till time rallies  
The men of your legion,  
Straggling apart.

But *I* may be stronger  
In the faith of heaven,  
May suffer the longer  
And resist the lure,  
And baffle the wronger,  
In his last wrong, his kindness,  
Killing by cure.



## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

Back throw I leisure  
Offered me—sinecures  
Back toss I pleasure  
And trashes that poll  
Take your half measure  
(Stale to me) give me  
Something for all !

## THE POOR YE HAVE ALWAYS WITH YOU

O weary feet  
That drag behind me  
A woman sweet  
In a dingy shawl  
A rest complete  
Where men can't find me  
Out of the street  
And away from all !

O weary feet  
That drag before me  
A woman sweet  
In the long ago

## THE POOR YE HAVE ALWAYS.

“ The dark night beat  
And overbore me,  
I shrank from sleat  
And sank in snow.”

O weary feet,  
That drag behind me,  
How long to beat  
In a world of woe?  
“ In road and street  
You will always find me,  
In rain and sleat  
And sun and snow.”

O weary feet,  
That drag before me,  
A woman sweet  
Or a man once tall :  
“ A rest complete  
In the womb that bore me,  
Out of the street  
And away from all ! ”

## FOOTSTEPS

Footsteps stepping stepping  
Can you not be still a little?

Here is one long lain in dark  
Harking with no heart to hark  
For the quiet when you fail to beat—  
Footsteps footsteps  
Footsteps on the street

Footsteps stopping stopping  
Growing going dying footsteps  
Here is one with a dull heart,  
Asking for his breath apart  
Asking you sad footsteps not to beat—  
Footsteps footsteps  
Footsteps on the street

Footsteps stepping stepping  
Can you not be still a little?  
Here is one must count the rhyme  
Of the beating feet of time,  
Asking to what doom—or Whom—we beat—  
Footsteps footsteps  
Footsteps on the street

## THE EXTREMIST.

Oh, did I meet the Devil to-day,  
Out on the lonely seaward wold?  
The Devil facing the sparkling spray,  
Unashamed by the sun-shed gold.

Was it sin so filled my blood?—  
Bit and fevered me, tossed me down,  
Fought me and wrought me down to the mud,  
Oozed me out of my noble renown—

Coaxed me, reasoned me, out of my own,  
Sent me back unmanned by the bout,  
With my high brain baffled and overthrown,  
Trembling under a blank, dull doubt.

No Gethsemane there on the knoll!  
No pure agony, ridden by the soul!  
The outworks standing, the citadel seized!  
The tools unbroken, the will diseased!

O, wide Power of the seaward airs,  
O good God of the sun-shed gold!  
All so consequent, all unawares!—  
Nothing unmistakably told!

## THE FOOL NINE DOOR, &c

No divisions—upon my heart !

No marked torrent between those moors !  
Nothing to keep them plainly apart,—  
This the Devil's and that side yours !

O for a flash of that sun, dear God !  
Throwing shadow and showing shine  
Or a gleam of stream to sever the sod—  
But never a sign—never a sign !

## SHELLEY

O Son of Light O spirit quick and young  
O interfused of fire and of the sea—  
(The sea that stilled the fire that winnowed  
thee)—  
O eyes of flashing spray and flaming tongue !

Shelley thou heart of subtle light, heart wrung  
By half a world's long longing to be free,  
A heart that swift to feel but never flee,  
To Might's false Right undying challenge flung

## SHELLEY.

Young, but with youth that more than knowledge knows :

Wild, with diviner reason, saner scorn.

Insolent, with the havoc sunlight throws  
When it destroys the darkness into morn.

Thy wisdom lacks not years, thy wisdom grows  
With our growth and the growth of time  
unborn.

## SONNET.

*(After reading a Revolutionary Book.)*

The stars are what they were ; the moon's clear  
power

Burns like a crystal furnace in the blue ;  
The world is that wide narrow world I knew,  
Last night, lone-walking near this solemn hour  
I—I am quickened with a vaster sense :

I reach a mountain's shadow toward the moon ;

I feel its power and sorrow, as at noon

I felt the sun's heat—larger and intense.

The stars are spun in letters—can I read?

One purer thought—one sooner-following  
deed,

And surely I could move the bends among,

And solve the Scroll that God has surely hung.

Nearer, at least ; at least a larger scope :

A comrade calling ; stronger light and hope.

## DAWN

I sit at work an old old woman  
Until my window peacock blue  
Declares another day unhuman  
Invades my candle's yellow hue

I like to see the daybreak coming  
For then I lay my labour by  
With heart that's sore and head that's hum  
ming,  
To slumber till the dawn is high

And what am I? The world awaiting  
The dawning from the blue to grey  
When she shall put her haste and hating  
Beneath the pillow hid away

The World—she sees her window gleaming  
The city tree tops stir and sing  
The day is born in golden dreaming  
Mankind is king! Mankind is king!

## NEVER.

There never was a morn so divine;  
There never was a moon to shine  
So round and silvern in day's blue sky;  
There never was a round lamp so high:  
And never a man so honoured as I:

Never a man on the sheen of the sea  
Or the homely mountains like to me;  
Nor birds so near to the straight walls winging;  
Nor wavelets' caress of the rocks, like singing.

There never was a moon so high,  
And never so much of truth in a lie—  
Never so little fear in speaking  
Lest we lose our love by seeking.

Man never had a morn so divine,  
And never was given the moon for a sign,  
For never man loved a love like mine.



## CELL SOLO \*

(\* A violin lover known to me, was a conscience prisoner in 1918 )

Dark and darker, up and downward,  
Go my thoughts wrongly wrought  
For I have left my violin  
Outside when I have entered in  
And thoughts are not so swift as music,  
And not so sweet not so sweet

For no sin I entered in  
Where the prison lets no light  
And nothing grow that is bright  
But for the sin of others  
Accused brothers—  
Yet brothers—  
I was taken and stricken and shaken  
And cast here lying but not long  
For no wrong  
Wrought I this hapless song  
Except the wrong of other men  
Who judged me and lodged me in this foul  
den

## CELL-SOLO.

My violin, and the other strings,  
Which sometimes gave me wings,  
And that carried me up, and out, and far,  
Unto the plains beyond the death of war;  
Where the mountains are the same as  
    meadows,  
Where the evening lights are the same as  
    shadows,  
Where God is the same as man,  
And life is the same as love,  
And truth is the same as music,  
And love is the same as truth,  
And age is the same as youth;  
They are afar.  
I used to go to these lands,  
By the use of these hands;  
But now—  
Idle, or working at folly, these hands,  
And afar these golden lands.

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By the use of these hands;  
But now—  
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And afar these golden lands.

## A BOY AND ME

Is there a light across the sky,  
A line of moony blue?  
Is there a tree top waving high  
To you? To you?  
There is none to me

Is there a rose amid the leaves  
To you to you a rose?  
A poppy in the corn sheaves  
And yellow beaks on crows?  
You must be young beside me

Take this watch  
And dangle it from the wall  
For time has gone too far to catch  
And life beyond recall  
And then you pray above me !

## A- 'SOLDIER'S FOLK.

His sister and his love,

They live at war, they ne'er forget,  
Though never gentler cooing dove

Than they when oft they met;  
And never deeper streams of woe  
Than his compassion for the two.

His sister and his love,

They met again that darksome day.  
A little cloud hung above,

And the grave compassionate lay.  
The two knelt o'er his head; but yet  
They live at war, they ne'er forget.

## ASSISTING SUPERSTITION

John Gibson told Alexander Robinson that all superstition was a curse. He emphasised this adding 'a cursed curse'. He clenched his enormous red knuckles and his eyes gleamed like a tiger's in the fading light of the half-starved anthracite stove. 'I would aid you in your propaganda,' said John Gibson, 'only your ideas of socialism are all wrong. You base it on superstition. God is to me a superstition. The Other World' as you call it 'is to me a blasted superstition blasted by the explosive power of modern thought. You and your thirteen at table are a superstition. We dined thirteen at the Red Hall here last January and you and I were both there—you got up first. We're here as well as can be, under the conditions of the world we live in and yet it is January now again—who is a <sup>'—'</sup> <sup>1</sup> thirteen! If I helped you <sup>2</sup> superstition!'

## ASSISTING SUPERSTITION.

He stuttered, and called it superstition in his excitement. He was not drunk, but he had long been what was called "peculiar;" his mind was a mass of inequalities. Rage and hate against superstition sometimes carried him to a pitch of feeling that was fever, frenzy, inspiration and impotence, all mingled together. He would smite the table then, and thump his vast boots on the rail of the chair, which had been known to break under these paroxysms. He had burst the mica windows of the anthracite stove with a poker. But still he remained a member of the Reformers' Club which met in the little Red Hall containing (as its gem) the stove. Somehow one liked John Gibson despite his violence and monotonous vendetta against heaven itself—so it seemed. But heaven is not so easy to hit as an anthracite stove.

The dark deepened in the Red Hall. Two hours passed, the night around grew quite still, the neighbours were in bed, the garden (in which the iron-roofed little meeting-shed stood) was covered with shadows, merging as the moon set. Still these two men, alone together, argued on. "It is January, I admit, but not the 12th yet," said Alexander Robinson, the pale, clean-cut young



## ASSISTING SUPERSTITION

John Gibson told Alexander Robinson that all superstition was a curse. He emphasised this adding 'a cursed curse!'. He clenched his enormous red knuckles and his eyes gleamed like a tiger's in the fading light of the half-starved anthracite stove. "I would aid you in your propaganda," said John Gibson, "only your ideas of socialism are all wrong. You base it on superstition. God is to me a superstition. The Other World, as you call it, is to me a blasted superstition, blasted by the explosive power of modern thought. You and your thirteen at table are a superstition. We dined thirteen at the Red Hall here last January and you and I were both there—you got up first. We are here, as well as can be, under the conditions of the world we live in and yet it is January now again—who is dead?—You and your thirteen! If I helped you I should be assisting superstition!"

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## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

man, who believed in God but also in superstitions. It will be the 12th—let's see—next Friday. This is the 8th. Give it a chance! You're not the boss of the Universe, John Gibson, and you needn't think so. There are more things, Horatio—'

'Than are dreamt of,' added John Gibson, cursing under his pipe stem. 'Perhaps so—but I know this: you are a fool to believe in these things. And I'm enough master of the Universe to know what's rot and what's not. Every devil in human flesh has taken superstition for his tool. Don't assist them. I wouldn't assist superstition—not if I was to be martyred or hanged for refusing. I have resisted it all my thirty years of life, and I would strike it dead if I could.' ~~and he turned the poker and shattered the last~~ jag of mica from the colourless stove. The glow had died out, and the young men wrangled on in the dark, growing more and more mad.

At two o'clock John Gibson stealthily left the shed, alone, wiping his hands on a piece of newspaper, which he threw away among the dark bushes.

Behind him, beside the lifeless stove, in the Red Hall (now quite black) Alexander Robin

## ASSISTING SUPERSTITION.

son lay dead, with a look as of interrupted argument upon his face.

The Thirteenth Guest had justified his own faith, but John Gibson did not realise this till afterwards. He was too horrified and excited at his own terrible act, and too tremulous still with the quarrel. "I won't assist superstition," he said.

## INFINALITY

This is a word it appears, of my own coining. It does not mean exactly the same as infinity though related to it. Walking on a wet road in a dark landscape streaked with wind and rain I have thought about this and looked ahead into the deep dusk. Gazing at the white billowing clouds, to day with their sharp snowy edges that seem to be rising to shut out the exquisite blueness behind and at the wide plain of variegated fields I try to write something on the subject and hope that it may not be a crude repetition of what many hearts have felt. Infinality—there is no abiding place. One has grown from childhood in a town and loved it and one leaves it after seeing changes take place that seem natural and rational. A friend I knew as a young fellow living sparsely trying his hand at a new business has grown up at my side into something like worldly prosperity. He has acquired a little pink villa in the suburbs his business has become a paying one he has married, the days of sleeping in the little shed

## INFINALITY.

next to his obscure "office" are over. His family is healthy, his wife is on the whole the right one—even in his friend's eyes. One knows that he will have changes. One's brain admits, when it is imagined, that accidents may occur to him which will knock all this prosperous happiness into pieces. But in one's real view this friend is "settled," one imagines only slight lapses or interruptions, one expects his life to go on in the same line though at varying pace. Returning two years later, one finds everything changed—in an unfitting way; not like the progressions in a novel, in which the man goes on from middle age to elderliness, enjoying or suffering the typical fortunes of middle life or age: but he has had to go back from the villa, with its warm light of an evening, with its motor-bike on which he ran into the town; his family has grown, and business has not improved in proportion. Comparatively straitened living has begun again—there is no finality. His name, which at the first stage had begun to spread not just over his town but over all Lancashire, is not thought so well of. One does not now feel confident about his future. It is not that to me such a career, a business man's advance from the shed to the villa, from the villa to

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

the big house appeals as the right life for men, generally speaking. But he chose it. I was glad to see it going on. And behold it has gone back. It is all different. Later perhaps conscription stepped in, and threw his whole circumstances still further asunder. Yet he might in character benefit by this. He had begun in the second stage to look rather too dull or middle-aged. The fresh glow of his young enthusiasm—the spirit which I seemed to sip (as it may be phrased) from him—which sent me away from him always cheered up—had lessened. Perhaps the hardships of a brutal foolishness war, will send him back to his old life with brighter eyes and a thinner jaw and neck more defined at the sides and a renewal of faith of reality—I suppose he is not the only one of us who has forgotten actualities a little by living the life of citizen father and competitor. Infinitely, perhaps that is the very moral of the story which he and we are learning to know. I know the theme is an old one indeed it is the theme of themes in some degree. *Tempus fugit* etc etc. But although everybody acknowledges that all things change and decay the general feeling seems most often to be that they change always along certain lines of change and decay in a certain stream.

## INFINALITY.

bed of descent. The expectation is that there are seasons in all people's lives like the four successive seasons of the year, and that winter does not break in suddenly upon the expanding leaves of summer, nor the sun sink in snow before autumn, that youth does not follow age, and that if a man respects certain simple rules he can have a good time, and also live advantageously to his fellows, and serve good purposes. No such thing : it appears, now and then, that even the good purposes and the good services, so far as this material world shows us, are interrupted and flattened away out of the sand of life, by one soaking of one wave, or by an idle foot, or by nothing that is understood. One thinks so often, over and over again, so and so is "fixed" in one's life—what he will be and do is evident now so long as he be and do anything—then it is all blasted. Unimaginable happenings have struck him ; he is gone. The stump on the pier where he sat, is empty. The ordinary is new. He did not alter during forty years, then suddenly he changed into a pillar of electric flame and vanished ; or he died quietly, but his death, and your own misfortunes in a similar way of life, teach you that he was not ordinary at all, for he had learned one lesson—however small—which would help



## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

you now if you could learn it which from your new point of view your new parallax (as Emerson astronomically calls it) now looks more important than all the science of the world You laboriously learn a little skill nothing lofty only a small province of dexterity or industry or knowledge or even mere trifling and play which you flatter yourself that you can do well know well play well You are under no illusion—it is not much But few people round about you can do the same You know there are people beyond the bound of the county who do it better And you do not try to be a miser with it or a tyrant—as men are so apt to do with every gift You dedicate it half laughingly to good But it is not yours it flies away in a night like the rest A stroke of paralysis too slight to make you call in a doctor too slight to give that name has spoiled your skill Or easier humiliation a new aspect in life shows you how small, how *surprisingly* small your degree of skill has always been and would be if you gave it a century of increase So it has gone You cannot even spell pronounce walk sketch form these letters with a pen as well as you thought it has gone one way or another Anything you set store by, is gone But there are reservations

## INFINALITY.

which will enable me to escape this law. I will not set store—Ah ! there I may be safe. Do not imagine it. The law will find me wherever I go, unless—but who can find the eternal in the temporal? Who can find the true in the semblances? Who finds the real in the very innocencies of trees tossing in the wind, and plain rustic fences, and vivid skies? It may cloud, it may go—it *will* go, when the unhappy moment comes. Perhaps the moment is when the wrong thought, the self-conscious thought, the thought of possession, appears in my mind as I enjoy.

The singularity strikes me that we read chapters after chapters in our own lives, or those of others, and we accept the leaps from one to another, and the collapses or successes towards the present date ; and then suddenly we become foolish and are converted, like tired rebels, to the present order of things, and we say in our hearts, “ So he came out all right in the end,” or “ So he fell at last, as he deserved, or did not (alas !) deserve to do ! ” And yet all the time a greater surprise may be waiting in the next chapter, the year or day after. We never learn infinality, we always think the present thing is final, all the more when we review all the changes of the past.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

Yet evil is infinal also good may come out of the worst madness which seems to be breaking the brain That is an encouragement which the startling transformations from good to evil from prosperity to disaster from the end to the new beginning, might suggest We have not mastered the laws at any moment (it may be winged by a prayer or a thought) the morning shows our horror to be a dream

Chesterton's man who threw himself from a flying machine trusting God to save him for he was asserting God against Satan awoke in bed happy At any instant you or I can do so and if we find the right word the right attitude of mind we shall unboundingly be delivered—till the next time! That is another message of infinality and perhaps it bears in it a beautiful hint of finality the real thing the light behind the sky

HUBERT BLENK, "BUCKET-SHOP  
KEEPER."\*

I'll draw myself, because the time will come  
When men will ask "What manner of man  
was he?"

By which date my (and your) lips may be  
dumb,

Dear reader, whom I leave this scroll to see.  
For great—or let us say important men  
Are thankless themes for current tongue and  
pen.

Then *physically*. I'm a solid man,  
Too solid for my own small purposes;  
Tall, with long hair, thin on the thinking-pan,  
And silver, I suppose the colour is,  
Or pewter; at a former time, my dad  
Said often what *black* hair the Blenks all had.

My father, I must set it down at once,  
Was rather an elusive customer.  
It isn't true our motto was: "Gott mit uns,"†  
As is asserted in the "Daily Burr."

\*"Bucket-shop" I shall not attempt to explain this financial slang  
† Uns rhymes with once

## THE FOOL NEAR DOOR, &c

I held the pictures—('here a genuine  
Grooze'')

And duly smiled if he should turn to me,  
I lost the job—it wasn't much to lose—

The year the boss wound up—in '63  
That furrow tugging down my mouth, both  
sides

Records sick walks and futile long 'bus rides

Those horizontal trenches on my brow—

You think all old men have them—no they  
don't

They mark the fight that I have waged till now  
With hungry days and cold which were my  
wont

You say these notes show competence to-day  
Not so not so the wolf is but at bay

Were I to slacken these tense forehead lines

This frown thin buten and these hairy snows,  
It would be like that affair in the Appenines—

The front trench lost the whole blamed  
battle goes

My chin retreats a little—why is that?

Surrender? No to ensconce itself in fat

My principles? I often read it said

And hear it whispered as I pass through halls

## HUBERT BLENK.

"No principle. . . No heart. He's all a head,  
A hard head . . . . . It's a case for the sepia  
balls ! " \*

I hear remarks like that, to keep me out  
From gentlemen's clubs, open to every lout.

Some of them cannot bear the way I dress,  
Because I can afford what baffles some,  
Or because I question custom's right to bless  
A certain hat upon the cerebrum,  
When custom means two dozen little nuts  
With nothing under their ruddy occiputs.

My principles? I hate weakness and want.  
I got enough of want, but was not weak.  
I hate one's grandmother's black eyes, that  
haunt  
And beg, and grudge a youngster's rosy  
cheek.

I remember these things, as most men may do,  
And I hate them, hate them, hate them —  
Wouldn't you?

I want to bring warmth into other flats,  
And banish other "grannies," and feed  
mothers.

\*Languid reference to black-balling

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

We were not German, as the black hair shows  
Nor Jewish witness my round generous nose

But Dad disowned me in my fourteenth year

After a feeble sort of fitful owning

He owned me to go messages for beer,

For carrying his bag and telephoning

He was, in fact a traveller—in goods

When sober and in person when in moods!

He travelled, and when business was the cause

I carried big bags to the station—where?

At Smoulton Coobray let us say it was

Inquire at such a station, if you care

But father doesn't matter here am I,

Accepting all responsibility

I come of a generation that was proud

To say I am I was the life was mine

And not to say My parents, alas, endowed

Me with this love for money and for wine"

—These features 'thick and sallow and these  
hands

Fat creased and able are Hubert's—so it  
stands

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

I want to work with benevolent aristocrats  
Or without them to retrieve our fallen  
brothers

And bring up those who never really fell  
Because their birth and death are set in hell

You know my scheme of Ha penny Eggs for  
Readers?

You know my old bureau for Sailor & kids?  
I want to see these kiddies hearty feeders  
I want to see the steam from stewpot lids  
I want to go down there and see it happen  
And say Don't sir me laddie put your cap  
on!

No you are perfectly right, dear sage peruser  
Of these posthumous papers I did hoax  
This war for instance I couldn't be a loser  
As I *should* have been without these jingo  
jokes

I'm not a jingo but my country & Me,  
Me and my like whatever their degree

I fight for every man who feels like me  
Disgust at other men of second merit  
Who get the dubs and carry the dignity  
Either by what they take or they inherit  
Men if you like of talent and of pluck—  
Well what is talent? I complain of luck



## HUBERT BLENK.

I complain of that fellow with the fancy hair—  
And the big voice shouting the things he's  
paid.

Another chance and maybe I'd be there,  
And he'd be here, paid for a different trade,  
And put what suited fools into his bucket  
Or try a better game and have to chuck it.

You think I'm cynical, brutal, and too crude;  
Any man who is honest feels the same.  
The saints, of course, remember the multitude  
And raise their hands, and say "We do not  
blame."

Such carry their sainthood into the inner room,  
But I'm a man and say I hate—(you know  
whom).

You *don't* know, never will know; now, that's  
strange.

Here am I, writing, there are you, afar.  
And in the meantime every form of change  
And the world become perhaps a bursting  
star,

Perhaps a world of prigs and solemn saints  
Who don't understand my heart and its com-  
plaints.

\* See Note at end.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

Don't understand! Well, pity me you of next  
æon,

Remember Bruce, and Wallace, and John,  
and James

And don't think I was a cad or an Epicurean  
Or a clod or a sod, without any loves or aims  
Remember the old heroes—what beasts they  
were

And allow for this my time and thus be fair

I'm a creature of my time, this 1916,

This year of wars and frauds and money bags  
With threads of gold and heroism mixed in  
And dreams about old books and ragged  
flags

And if as it happens was an Editor,  
Which seems to make every fool your creditor

This bucket shop —the story seems too  
stale

~~I~~ wasn't true I dipped like other betters  
(No better though than I) and when you fail  
You find every fickle rogue among your  
debtors

And you are a debtor to such pattern people,  
Each ought to go about with a crown and  
steeple

## HUBERT BLENK.

There seem so many prigs—so many solemn  
Sad fools who take their maxims seriously  
While I can always write a sounding column  
And then go home counting the £. s. d.—  
Which makes me worse than them—I wonder,  
I wonder.  
At any rate, I don't mean to go under.

Goodbye, then, Mr. future scornful student,  
You've glanced at this big face once in a  
while.  
You've heard some things exceedingly im-  
prudent,  
Now, watch it as it goes—you'll see my smile.  
And if you don't esteem it, let it pass;  
You may have just been looking in the glass.

NOTE —The person, sketched here by himself, has apparently a great sense of his own importance. The metre is irregular in the extreme, or rather there are continual lapses from its model. The "fellow with the fancy hair" might be Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, but that would almost necessarily imply that "Mr. Blenk" was Horatio Bottomley, and it would be a pity to suggest that

## A CHRISTIAN MUNITIONER

When Bob went into the Beautiful Valley,  
Fighting the foe at Suvla Bay  
The doctor said I must somehow rally  
And fight like Bob that day

My arms are strong and my fingers supple  
My nerves by now can bear a bus  
Though it isn't every plighted couple  
Are torn in two like us

Later when hate and longing still tore me  
And love that left me little to lose  
I saw on a sunny wall before me  
Two bills for me to choose

The one said 'Women workers wanted' —  
—The shell-case shed (and that was my  
choice)  
But the other bill it was that haunted  
My memory like Bob's voice !

## A CHRISTIAN MUNITIONER.

A stupid thing, "The Women of the Nations,"  
A Women of all the Peoples Guild;  
My God, it makes me lose my patience  
To see these "speakers" billed!

I needed work, but there isn't money  
In Guilds and such (I've had a taste),  
Yet what is life with my boy, my honey,  
A-lying dead and waste?

I might have gone to the Women of the  
Nations,  
But the parson laughed at the painted dove  
And said to me: "Think of your relations,  
And labour on in love."

So I labour on, till Christ reclaims me,  
With a row of gleaming pots to fill;  
And it isn't Christ, or the League, that blames  
me,  
It's Bob that cries—"Don't kill!"

## FATHER CHRISTMAS \*

All the little splinters of the sun

Were shining like gold tassels made of braid  
And there was silence from the bursting gun,  
And I was not afraid

I listened standing leaning on red mud,  
And wiped off from my thumb a trickle of  
blood

Oh what a morning ! What a lovely day—

If we could hear this silence all the time  
And listen to our heart throbs once in a way  
And wipe away some grime  
And far away, above in clear bright sky  
See birds and tree tops—and not need to die

I was a poet ere I came out here—

(That is they called me "poet," those at  
home)

And I was wont to study sunlight clear  
And trees and flakes of foam

\* From France let us say 1915

## FATHER CHRISTMAS.

And now I find it hard to turn a rhyme  
About the blood, and guns, and huns, and  
grime.

But listen, and I'll tell you why they call  
Me "Father Christmas"; I was going to tell.  
It was because of what did then befall  
That Christmas Day in hell.  
I talked with brother Hun across the lines,  
And hence your bandages and invalid wines!

I talked to brother Hun; I was "the first  
That ever burst"—you know the old bard's  
phrase.

And it was then forbidden; at the worst,  
It was the day of days;  
And surely you can speak a little word  
To a lone brother.—"Puttees" needn't have  
heard.

"Puttees" was what we call (or called) the  
Sub.

Because he made some fuss respecting such;  
And it just happened that that cocky cub  
Was there and heard too much.  
And hence these bandages, which please slip  
down—

They hurt somehow; I didn't mean to frown.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

'Puttees' was there, and this is how it went  
I'll tell you—sorry to be so full blown  
So dreary and long winded, but I meant  
To tell you when alone  
And when these kippers listen, and that nurse,  
It makes my back bad and my story worse

Now listen—I was listening that clear dawn,  
It was so lovely as I said, and blue,  
It was like Christmas on a Surrey lawn—  
You wouldn't think I knew,  
But I've been up and down and never saw  
A keener sky with warmth but still no thaw

And I got thinking and took down my Book  
Out of the wet hole in the silly muck  
And turned as anybody might to look  
At any page, for luck  
And the book opened at His blessed birth,  
And O my God, how bloody looked the  
earth !

I didn't look around I couldn't then  
I just kept staring at the smeared old words,  
And felt as if all strife between mad men  
Was turned to songs of birds  
And the old sun was shining on so mild  
Just as when I went walking as a child



## FATHER CHRISTMAS.

HE was a child ; a wee, fat kid :

And I a child, and then that Hun—

Oh God, don't bother what he did !

(Was he the Evil One?)

It doesn't matter at all, if he was man,

And formerly a child when he began.

It isn't the way to teach him, if he's foul—

It isn't the way to punish his overlords,  
That we should stab *him* in the bleeding bowel

And run off from his words

When he is crying words we can translate,

“ Oh, mother, mother ! ” and not a hymn of  
hate.

So I got up, out of the trench,

And didn't care a damn for shells.

There *was* none, and *kein* Hun, *kein mensch*,

But dead, and nothing else :

And though it was a climb and jump for me,

At first no man or officer seemed to see.

And I cried as if my heart was mad

With sentiment like Christmas cards :

“ A merry Christmas, Hanz, my lad ! ”

It was a sight for bards !

It was a song, to feel myself just run

And almost dance towards the bleeding hun.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

It was a song I tell you in my ears—

The Christmas day so bright, the sun so  
warm,

The absolute abandonment of fears,

Forgetfulness of harm

I cried and out popped one and other heads  
Among the barb wire and smashed steel and  
deads

I took the hun by his blood stained hand,

I shook it and cried and both of us wept

Tears was flowing on either hand,

And still the shell fire slept

And the guns and rifles said no sort of thing

And the officers and men were wondering

And then he fell down dead—

And I got a bullet through the arm and rib

And hence well that is all that's to be said

And hence I m in this crib

The Sub had seen me and they sent a blast

I might have known this Christmas wasn't like  
last

## THE LITTLE CROSS.\*

Upon the heavens widely blue,  
Between the clouds embulging bright,  
A little cross—too small for hue—  
Was murmuring above the white.

A little cross, atop the tree  
Of all creation rising fair,  
The snowy igdrasil, all free,  
All vast, and yet all gentle, there.

That is the primal dragon-fly :  
The human lesson learnt in vain :  
The cross with which we crucify  
Not Germany, but Christ again.

\*An aeroplane very high above a cloud like a vast tree.

## THE JUDGE

I sat in a gilded chair  
And looked on the heads of hacks,  
But a face looked out of the chiaroscuro  
Behind the pressmen's backs  
And I picked at a pen  
Before I looked again

I dreamed the face of course—  
The multitude of affairs,"\*  
But I keep my affairs to their proper place,  
And my dreams might keep to theirs  
It was a young face  
Out of its proper place

No it was not our Saviour  
I know Lord Overshaw  
Was accustomed to say he saw Christ Jesus,  
But myself I never saw  
Though indeed I pray,  
Before judgment, every day

\* A dream cometh through much bousness"—  
(*Ecclesiastes*)

## THE JUDGE.

It was a face without name,  
Deep with anxious grief,  
That now looked out of the dark and  
brightened,  
Showing a strange relief :  
And I looked with some joy  
At the unusual boy.

" You know the view of the law.  
Your course was a foolish one.  
You deliberately risked this case "—  
I stopped and looked at the sun,  
Where it shone through the blind  
On the heads, and the boy behind.

" *You are not uneducated ;*  
You know what war implies.  
I quite concede your motives were pure  
Though illegal and unwise :  
Of course you can think,  
But you mustn't think in ink.

" You must not print your thoughts  
If they lead to dismay and doubt.  
We have seen that they do so lead, and  
therefore,"  
—I paused, and coughed words out.  
It was just as if something  
Upset me—(a rum thing!).

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c.

I had a burst of poetry,  
As if I sang of youth  
The prisoner did not sit there  
With his rash seditious truth,  
The dust and the flies  
Faded from my eyes

O God I was I a poet  
That I should dream this thing  
That I should float on golden clouds  
And taste the joy of Spring  
And feel pity  
For the whole city?

I saw a shoal of angels  
Who laughed and flattered by,  
I cried to them and bathed in the foam  
Of a rose cloud in the sky  
And God smiled  
As if I were a child

O God that I were in that dock  
With the heart that I had then  
A heart of happiness not from the body  
Nor from the smiles of men,  
At least only the good  
Looking out of the multitude

## THE JUDGE.

Can it be? Is it so?

That the joy in prison cells  
Is worth all joy from books and wine  
And love and all things else?  
That seemed to be  
What the boy showed me.

Boy? There wasn't a boy,  
But an old man in a chair;  
I sitting and hesitating  
And the prisoner over there—  
And a thick squat chap  
Who didn't care a rap.

“And therefore I pronounce sentence,  
As leniently as may be;  
Had you not pleaded guilty  
It should have been rather three,  
—But that must count to your good—  
Two years penal servitude.”

[1916.]

## TRAITORS TRIUMPHANT

It is we men and officers,  
Who joined the thronging foe  
It is we men and officers,  
Who turned as we did go,  
It is we, men and officers  
Who cried to our comrades— ' No !

We enjoyed that day—  
Oh happy happy twilight !  
We and they  
Burnished by the sunlight  
We and they  
Facing the one way !

We rejoiced in shells  
We rejoiced in punishment  
Love redeemed all else  
We had needed punishment  
We and they—our brother wedding bells  
Seized and tuned the screaming shells



## TRAITORS TRIUMPHANT.

You, bearded men of God,  
All down the ages;  
We with you to-day have trod  
All down the ages!  
We have washed with our blood  
The crime of the ages!

Traitors triumphant,  
Traitors to the land of hate,  
Traitors triumphant,  
We and these elate!

## A TRAVELLER.

Joy sheltered in my eye,  
And joy is hurried thence.  
Love tenanted my lips,  
But where was innocence?  
Love leaves me in this sigh,  
For love is now offence;  
And joy I seek in ships.  
But what of innocence?

I would the ships would drown  
In pools of night immense,  
That joy would be despair,  
Then love be innocence:

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

For when I struggle down  
Out of the life of sense  
I'll meet three mermaids there,  
Love Joy and Innocence

## SUBSTITUTES

*Suggested by the new intention—potato  
butter*

Dear rulers of us humble folk  
Do give us waiting to be fed  
Adulterated artichoke,  
A substitute for bread

Dear government who make us glad,  
Do give us with our daily glee  
Chipped cane—with stain it's not so bad  
A substitute for tea

Dear demi gods—yes, dear indeed !  
Please pass the hardy hemlock root  
To freshen us who sorely need  
A substitute for fruit

## SUBSTITUTES.

A pity that you cannot give,  
When thousands daily lose their breath,  
To men who, dying, long to live,  
A substitute for death !

O statesmen, you are so astute,  
Yet all your cunning seems Na poo ;  
We only want one substitute,  
A substitute for you.

*January, 1918.*

## NO HOPE.

The pulse of hate is in my love—  
Oh, devil's work that this should be !  
There was a smooth cloud-cloke above,  
A shawl of dusky mystery ;  
There was a peach-tree blossom-white,  
That burned in day and beamed at night.

Is there, then, never ought unmixed?—  
Oh, devil-foiling gardener, God :  
The roots of beauty ever fixed  
In wormy dark below the sod !  
Is then no peach-tree blooming high  
All purity, all life, all sky?

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

The pulse of hate is in thy love,  
Of love in hate, of her in thee  
Of mystery the sun is wove,  
The day is dark the night is free,  
No hope is thine nor mine until  
All dies and then—so small, so still!

## ' THE DUKE'S TURN '

The wonderful shimmering shadow'd nook  
With the road and the rowan stems and the  
multifold ferns  
And the sun on the butter cups among mottled  
grass  
Moved by the loving, soft and sunny breeze  
From the splendid summer anger of the sea  
Here we sat on the mossy cushioned wall  
You, my brother, now called dead  
You of the big blue bandaged head  
I looking up, perhaps to the warm blue sky  
You looking down but seeing as lofty things,  
And both of us awhile happier than dukes or  
kings

## TO MOTHER.

Mother, the trees are soft along the night;  
The summer sky is blue, with scarce a star;  
My thoughts are soft and touch the city far  
That dusks You, or dims your rim of light.  
You are the star, Mother, of gentle might,  
That haunts the fir-tree tops where shadows  
    are,  
Whose glinting courage gloom can never  
    mar,  
Whose smile, like a cheery tear, breaks ever  
    bright.

You are among the thoughts of my night-blue :  
I never wholly lost you from the sky :  
For, even when the fog-clouds duskly drew,  
And you were lonelier and I more shy,  
I felt the dusty clouds could quench not you,  
You trusted the loveless shadows were not I.

## RONDEAU ON NEW YEAR'S EVE

On New Year's Eve I like to read  
Not Lloyd nor George, La Queue, nor  
"Queed"

But that deep-coloured dirge and song  
In which the thoughts of 'Eli' throng  
About the world's old wounds that bleed

He saw the wounds with other creed  
Than mine perhaps one does not need  
To wonder which is right and wrong  
On New Year's Eve

The wounds are there all day they plead,  
From year to year they burn and breed  
All peoples ask 'How long? How long?'  
Ere all in faith that love is strong  
Begin a good New Year indeed,  
On New Year's Eve?

*December 29th 1917*

## THE MINISTER FOR TOOLS.

The Chancellor has silver hair,  
But flabby features, and I knew  
That he for years was our despair,  
And the rudder of the Tory crew.  
He labelled himself a Liberal—  
Like "Stick No Bills" on a scribbled wall.

No bills—for bills are awkward to pay!  
But everyone knows what's written on him.  
It's easier now that his hair is grey  
And the Radicals call him "Sunny Jim."  
He gave the job of buying me  
To another man, for he knew my fee.

He knew, Lord James, what sort of sum  
Was going to keep my mouth shut up;  
He guessed the size of minimum  
Was going to grow the buttercup  
And the pretty flowers of rhetorical praise,  
Instead of the thistles where asses graze!

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

It's just as well to be bluff and straight  
I'll tell you, talking like this, I shied  
I nearly waited a day too late  
And let young Arthur slip inside  
Which might have been quite too good for  
Arty,  
But desperate bad for the Labour Party

Arthur has got the gift of the chat  
But not much judgment under it all  
While I may shine much less at that  
But I understand a Liberal  
If Arthur had entered the Ministry  
It would have been 'chuck' for you and  
me

Labour, after this silly war  
Would have had outer darkness given,  
Conditions a hundred times worse than before  
And that to last till the Kingdom of Heaven,  
Well I'm a Christian like the rest  
But I like the Kingdom of Earth the best

Earth? Do you think we live upon gold  
In the far, far kingdom of jasper and pearl,  
And until then we do what we're told  
And drink the wrong drink and wed the  
wrong girl



## THE MINISTER FOR TOOLS.

And see our sons die, blown to bits—  
And everything a maze of misfits!—

A mad mix-up, and no way out—  
Unless you listen to voices like his.  
I hate the scut—the lolling lout,  
No manners, and a scornful phiz!  
I hate him, but do you suppose  
I have forgotten my brother's woes?

Do you suppose I have lived so long  
That the falling ceiling has fallen away  
Out of my heart, and the filthy wrong  
They did who made us live that way,  
And gave me a wife with 500 quid,  
Who never went through it as I did?

Do you imagine, Chancellor, you  
With the fat smug smile and the easy pose,  
That the creased grey legs you are crossing,  
grew .  
Out of ought but my brothers' woes?  
That the shining boots with the pointed tips  
Are standing on poor men's foreheads and  
lips?

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

Standing on mouths to keep them shut—  
Turning the men into stocks of stone  
Turning the girl into hopeless slut—  
(I couldn't marry her—was I alone?)  
Turning the web of life all awry  
From the day we breathe to the day we die !

A little hope a gleam of light—  
And a salary too I quite admit  
But often the easy thing's the right,  
And I'm growing old and tired of it—  
Tired of failure tired of strife—  
Tired of the shut door all through life

The open door has blazed for me—  
I've walked to Buckingham Palace now,  
I feel the false and fligree  
But the crown is for the poor man's brow  
And if this added knighthood comes  
It will be — 'Arise Sir, You of the Slums !'

You of the matted hair and the eye  
So pleading and so dark beneath  
You whom I succour by and by—  
Or try to succour and bequeath

## THE MINISTER FOR TOOLS.

These hopes and longings to, and all  
I'll get from being a Liberal.

O brother, brother, forgive, forgive !  
The heart was crying all the time  
I know that you, like me, must live. .  
There wasn't time, there wasn't time.  
A better man, of brighter brains,  
Might later "consolidate the gains."

[1916.]

[NOTE: There are no absolute portraits in this. Arthur, or "Arty," is an imaginary enthusiast. The Minister for Tools is a Labour opportunist, the period is the War.]

## POSTING A LETTER

He being my rival gave me a letter to post,  
An open letter a story he bade me read  
I thought it would be as good as mine, or most,  
As the one I was sending to the same paper  
indeed

But I did not see in him such matter as this  
That lies before me lying doubly a little—  
For a man a little lies if he writes like this  
And lives talking and leering like any lick  
spittle

I mean without any words of roughness or  
rage

That I never thought to see such strength and  
—well

Such shine, such beauty, in a measure on his  
page

As shines here now as woos me with a spell  
Oh dear! oh dear! It's good it's good, you  
know

He writes with a vigour his voice never con  
veyed

## POSTING A LETTER.

His voice—I mean he's a quiet, eager man,  
With a talkative, talkative way, and a ready  
blush,

I knew he was a poet; but purpose and plan,  
Strength and clearness, and freedom from  
gloze and gush,

These were mine, I supposed, an hour ago,  
An hour that has moved him and me from light  
to shade.

That's how it looks—this letter, this long lean  
paper,

Which I could burn by holding it in that fire;  
Shines and burns already, a steady taper,  
And I am in a shadow of dead desire.

My own story goes; but not that only  
I never knew what one's success could teach:  
Another learns from it to sink back lonely  
Into the shadow beyond the firelight's reach.  
I sit here in the growing dark, time grows;  
And the long letter in the red light glows.

If the letter did not go, but flared  
In flame, one moment, up that furrowed stone,  
And I "had posted it,"—for all he cared!  
The money does not trouble him. My own  
Does trouble me—or rather what I lack.  
And my own article might not come back.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

*In articulo mortis*, an article dies,  
Or up the chimney inarticulate flies  
A thousand articles have passed in smoke—  
I believe he would appreciate the joke  
His skill, his power remain ah! there's the  
rub!

They do remain for him and also for me  
For Sisyphus the tiny hairy grub  
To knock him down again who climbs his  
tree

There! in verse I don't seem quite his equal  
And in prose—as bad as rhyme—but what's the  
sequel?

If I kill another's truth, another's skill  
The worst it does is this—it does not die  
It dies for him but it does but live for me  
With a strength and splendour shining like a  
hill

Of sunny top amazing in the sky,  
And like a yellow home atop the tree  
Where the hairy climbing maggot means to  
be!

Dash to your images! if I kill his story  
It turns into a twice damned dangerous glory  
And I shall fail fail, who conquer now,  
The flame in the fire tells me—sinking low

## POSTING A LETTER.

When I sink in the procrastination slough,  
And flying high when I decide to go.

Do you know

What the flame looks like? Like a looking-  
glass,

Through which sweet Alice, am I sleeping?  
goes,

Or a long oblong manuscript, or a door to pass  
To glory through, white flame, gold frame,  
bright glows;

A looking-glass, a looking looking-glass,  
Look and look and look, and see—a brow  
Very high, and brilliant eyes, and a dark mass  
Of hair, a little falsely free somehow.

Through the oblong frame, the face that seems  
to shine

I know is his, and yet I think is mine.

## REMARKS

### ADHESION

I take a garden fork in my hand and a walking stick with it and there is something (say a sack) in my other hand. I am coming off the field after digging. Now it seems easy to me at a certain moment, to imagine that just as I hold the fork and together with it the stick so do I hold my body. I might drop the two things from my hand. I might drop my body. I find the two things in my hand rather troublesome just a little heavy and inconvenient. So w in my body, at times. Yet I can still grasp these implements and keep them together, not too ridiculously sticking out apart so with the various muscles and functions of body.

You say "Yes but your soul inheres in or adheres to your body, or ought to do so."

True and I like it but so does my hand cohere with, or adhere to the fork and stick examine closely and there is no inextricable adhesion



## REMARKS.

### “ LOVE ” AND “ CHRISTIAN. ”

Such words as Love and Christian have lost accurate meaning and it is better to avoid their use, in general, if you mean what *they* used to mean. As one finds words do not convey one's special meaning, in the case of words so serious as these, it is best to discard their frequent use, and if necessary express one's meaning in many simple words of more uncorrupted value, such as “am,” “is,” “it,” “he,” “do,” “go,” “come,” “tea-pot,”—or in acts.

It is always replied by the verbalist, or others, that because a word is misused that is no reason for not using it properly in season; but the practical fact is that when words are so misused, and in so many different senses as these, while it is pretended or assumed that they have but a special sense, then it is a waste of time to employ such words, and a gain of time and understanding to use a thousand simple ones instead of these few complex ones.

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### SUNFLOWERS.

Their old-gold faces and young-gold whiskers.

## REMARKS

### ADHESION

I take a garden fork in my hand and a walking stick with it and there is something (say a sack) in my other hand I am coming off the field after digging Now it seems easy to me at a certain moment, to imagine that just as I hold the fork and together with it the stick so do I hold my body I might drop the two things from my hand I might drop my body I find the two things in my hand rather troublesome just a little heavy and inconvenient So with my body, at times Yet I can still grasp these implements and keep them together not too ridiculously sticking out apart so with the various muscles and functions of body

You say ' Yes but your soul inheres in, or adheres to your body, or ought to do so

True, and I like it but so does my hand cohere with or adhere to the fork and stick examine closely and there is no inextricable adhesion

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### SUNFLOWERS.

Their old-gold faces and young-gold whiskers.

# THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

## FACULTIES

The more that our faculties become developed the less do they continue to give us the joy of property. They do not now seem to belong to us ourselves, but to the world, or to somebody else—if they belong at all.

The way to regard gifts, learning acquirements is as so many tools. That is often said, but the thought is not so familiar that these tools often (even after they have been very keen and efficacious) become suddenly futile and have to be renewed. Regard them as part of yourself and you have endless disappointments and mortifications. Regard them as pleasant tools to serve yourself and God and man and you will enjoy them tremendously. In connection with this read Edward Carpenter's thought about the actual pleasure of declining faculty, and my meaning may be clearer. But do not fall into mere conventional ruts of religious thought. I have had a glimpse of a discovery, but I may have lost it or may not be able to suggest or express it to you—(even to myself?)

If I were the cleverest man on Earth, and knew it it would be dangerous for me (the risk is slight at present). I should be apt to

## THE BOMBER OF HEAVEN.

forget that there might be millions of finer minds elsewhere, or, if I remembered that, I might be as jealous and irritably ambitious as ever. The thing is to be as clever as one's self !

## THE BOMBER OF HEAVEN.

Fifteen thousand feet in air  
Is fifteen thousand feet,  
But *I* did, like a demon, dare  
The heights of heaven sweet.

All but one of the bombs had blazed  
A mountain-depth of blue,  
But more than mountain-sheep they dazed  
And worse than foxes slew.

The city of the world's curse  
Took twenty stabs of mine;  
A chapel, and more holy Bourse,  
Have drunk God's holy wine.

A war for God ! A war for God !  
A war for lives to be !  
Twenty lashes of his rod—  
And now to the upward sea !

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

Drawn drawn to the veils of dawn  
Like a flying happy fly  
Into the whirly web upgone  
Into the helpless sky !

And does his hand so summon me  
So fiercely, madly on?—  
Into the upward icy sea  
Into the blue blue dawn !

Far far not mine the car,  
And the motion and the quest  
A Holy War, a righteous war !  
A star ! a bursting breast !

Through the blue and to the inane  
The deep the still all cold,  
Pale and deep slipping to sleep—  
Filmy fold and fold

Blaze of blue I sank into  
With colours all at one  
And this was heaven this, I knew,  
More golden than the sun

Sleepy I drew the last bomb forth  
And fired its auto string  
And on the City of All Worth  
Spent it upon the King !

## THE BOMBER OF HEAVEN.

And nothing happened then, but this :  
I slept into a death,  
And a beautiful comrade leaned to 'kiss  
And bring me back to breath.

## LOVE'S ECLIPSE.

God has served His purpose in the world.  
The acres lie all bare, the sun is down.  
The lives and loves against the sun were hurled;  
Into the sun and darkness all have flown;  
And God has done his duty by the world !

O love, forgive me if I cry awhile. . .  
I cannot cry, the tears will never come.  
I only know that all of hope is vile,  
And that I am a fragment cold and dumb,  
A puff of dust behind God's sun gone deep,  
For God has done his work and gone to sleep,  
And in his murmur cursed his creatures small—  
If ever there were any God at all .  
God was love.

## LOVE REVIVING

God was Love the sphynx word said  
And God is gone love being dead  
And hope is far afar afar—awake?  
Oh love remount the mountains for my sake,  
A little little climb a few stones stepped,  
A glint of light would tell us if He slept  
Or died for ever—death below dead death  
Whereto we follow with our painful breath

O love a little footing up the hill !  
A step a breathing one sweet whisper still  
And the new music might burst forth—to die  
As the old died as all eternal die  
Only earth's ash escapes mortality  
The fire is over and burnt before we saw,  
The stones we hate confront us like a law  
The cursed day afflicts repeated nights,  
And every weight and warp that hates and  
smites  
Yet O, that something if it live—  
Forgive, forgive forgive !



## HALF-REAL.

The orator lay by his candle's flame,  
And watched it till his eyelids dreamed,  
And his thought, as usual, gathered to frame  
A text—on tongues that shone and gleamed.  
Tongues of fire, tongues of hate,  
His own tongue playing with fate.

The tongue that was one of the holy tools  
Of the great wise man who was born that  
day,  
A baby breathed on by horses and mules,  
In the stable, lying small in the hay;  
A little thing, and long ago;  
And the tongue and the head are low.

"Half-real," he said, "that is I;  
"For the moon through the window is real  
and true,  
"And the wife as true as that eye in the sky,  
"And the stars are real, though far and few:  
"But I, who talk all day,  
"Am getting far away.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

*We were meant to be real, we  
The spirits poured into vessels of men,  
But day by day I grow less free  
From the tyranny of tongue and pen,  
Habit and comfort suck the wine  
Out of the heart that was mine '*

*So wholly real he was and his tongue  
Rose like a flame above the wick,  
The gold—and above the gold was flung  
A pure white sheen more soft and quick  
And for a time the people heard  
His every heart felt word'*

*But the half real is the flame of this earth  
And only the saints can live the true  
So scarcely the loftier flame had birth  
When it sank from gold to red and blue,  
And from that to the wick and the fiery crown  
And the black dead limb it went down*

*A saint with a taper in his hand  
Passed along and smiled to light  
The candle tops the withered brand  
The lamp that should have shone in night  
he lit them, they fell low*

*so?*

\*

## THE STATESMAN'S WIFE.

The stars in hissing factories in daylight;  
The clouds of smoke that dim the chimney-  
stalks;

The blackened arches, and the bleak truck-  
yards;

The wet-shawled women, and the laden bairns;  
Vast boilers, smoke again, and sulphurous  
smells;

The manager, cycling in his waterproof cape;  
And all the loud activity of a city;  
There lives in me a thing that loves them all.

The golden light of cars, the shining streets;  
And then the grey trees, and dim pools, of  
parks;

The lovely pure sky of the twilight country;  
The tree-y fibres on the horizon's languor;  
The clouds, the pure air, and the labouring  
folk;

The snow slight on the grass, the smell of earth,  
And sound of my own footfalls on wet ash,  
There lives in me a thing that joys in all.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

A cat that leaps the railings in the town,  
A light behind gold curtains, softly streaked,  
The tragic merry hearts within the rooms  
A train in joy, and noise and ruddy bluster,  
Or lines of elms and sky and loneliness,  
Confetti on the street and common laughter,  
Or mourning by the graveside, damp and dark  
Without my will, I find a joy in all

Then blame me not if he whose voice was hope  
And power, and fertility and love  
(Love for the child of half love with the man)  
If he has sounded echoes in my soul,  
And I have turned from other human sounds  
Just for a little while and watched the strong  
Afflict the weak and praised the wicked thing  
There lives in me a thing akin to all

Then blame me not if I have nourished flesh  
And weighted soul forgetting truer joys  
For there is in me joy that turns to all

And blame me not if I have fooled with voice  
(How short a fooling ere all voices merge  
In wisdom that is joy and that is All!)

And blame me not if love forgets its youth,  
And freshness, and fair branches and young  
checks

And goes another way, the way of all

## THE STATESMAN'S WIFE.

And blame me not, so short my erring path ;  
So brief my breath, so impotent my rage ;  
So near the joining of the paths of all,  
Where waits for me the joy of thee and all.

## FAILURE.

This is the book of failure, which is blest,  
And into it I have shut many griefs,  
And out of it have lived many reliefs  
Which did not yield my spirit better rest.

This is the book of Loss, and what I missed,  
Shines in the sky above in bolder script ;  
A hand has written it with stylus dipped  
Into the golden sun-swoon in the West.

This is so little because that is great,  
And I abide the power and the date  
When what is God's shall be my poem too ;  
Till then, my fellow-failer, read and dream,  
Seeing, as I do, in my common scheme,  
His much forgotten glory, ever new.

## LIMBO

Not death not death I fear  
The shutting of an open troubled eye  
If this were life it were not dark to die  
And step from snow time to the springing  
year

Not death I fear  
If this were death to cross the sky  
Into a nothing or a new world nigh  
And quite forget the fret and joyance here  
But that—to shiver on the brink of being  
To freshning vapours dead but not unseeing  
To old sad memories looking wistful back  
The death which is a groping among shadows  
Old friends half lost a mist on common  
meadows  
Not yet gone forward and no going back I

## TEA.

I am not going to analyse tea arithmetically, and tell what many readers know, that it is made up of so much tannic acid, and so much volatile oil, and so forth. I shall attempt a sketchy *psychological* analysis; something like this :—

TEA : Artificially-produced happiness, cheeriness; *transitory* freedom of spirit, pen and tongue x per cent.

Reaction, loss of control, habit-slavery, jumpiness, exaggeration of small troubles, excessive susceptibility to all sorts of nervous shock, irritability, need of more tea y per cent.

Net gain or net loss z per cent.

“Am glad he is dead by . . . £——,” as Chatterton wrote at the end of his calculation about what he had gained and lost by having to do with a great public man. When we have stated the probable gains and losses we incur from the tea habit, we may give it up and say we are glad the habit is dead, glad to the extent of *x*, *y*, or *z*.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

On the other hand we may decline to give up tea, and we may give up the problem

It is a problem for anyone who has made a habit of tea and who has learned to depend upon it in these depressing days and nights. Tea at night! Think of it! Someone once wrote on "Midnight Tea" and said that these two words contained the sum of joy. The darkness, the gently glowing candle light, the clinking of a spoon against its eager cup, the hissing of a kettle that fizzles on to the gas-ring. A friendly voice at the bedside saying "Tea?" Ah!

Leigh Hunt or some other has told these delights. I make haste to interjaculate here that I am writing against tea, on the whole not in favour of it. But its joys must be allowed. If we are to fight it we must not under-rate the enemy. It is a drug or let us say a "weed," of unearthly power. It has not a little of the magic attraction of opium and De Quincey was quite right to mention them together. I believe Hazlitt said that tea "kept the palace of his soul serene" but that was while he was drinking it, or while it influenced him. What of the after effects?

I do not go so far as some Spartans who say that a drink or food is to be judged by your



## TEA.

condition when you are *not* taking it, and that the more miserable you then are the worse is the "drug" which you are doing without ! That would prove air and water to be the real poisons, and prussic acid a benefit. But if tea makes you more undependable (in your state of reaction) than you used normally to be, and if it makes you too impressionable while you are under its immediate influence, then it is so far an evil.

I do not deny its good. It often helps, where nothing else would shake off the paralysis of cold, fear, sulkiness, stupidity, depression. Children might often be extricated from sulks by tea. But don't depend on it. Don't make a daily, or at any rate a thrice-daily habit of it. Reduce its strength and reduce its quantity. Personally, I think the latter is more important, for wishy-washy tea does not even serve the purpose of tea at all, and is about as bad for the digestive juices.

Numbers of people think they get no harm from tea, because they are not physically introspective; they do not notice its effect on their memory, either; it often injures memory, seeming to have the power of driving the mind onward and interfering with its going back.

No doubt it affects people in vastly differing

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

degrees Some are almost inebriated by it, others "didn't notice anything" and "could perfectly well do without it"—but this they never prove in practice!

Personally I get a headache almost every time I try to pause in my tea libations but I have sometimes struggled through and attained a period of freedom I believe the solution may be gradually extended periods of freedom plus healthy living in other ways plus active mental work in the morning hours

Tea in the morning wakes up one's mentality But if a purposeful effort, and a pleasant one of the brain is made instead that is quite as effective And there is little doubt that the first hour or two of the day decides that day's success It is the childhood the impressionable time of the day That is why tea in the morning with its stimulative effect on the brain, heart spirits and even I think on digestion (though a meretricious effect there) is so tempting to a 'brain worker' Without his tea (or coffee which for the purpose of this article may be taken as tea or abstained from) he is dull in the morning and that means that he is likely to be dull all day

Tolstoy's *The First Step* is a very significant title When we had taken the first step, and

## TEA.

given up meat, we had made everything else easier. The will was learning to walk. Here, then, is the second step. Abstinence from tea is not indispensable. Good men and women live precious lives which include three tea meals, perhaps ten cups, a day. Keir Hardie is said to have approached the Samuel Johnson standard. But good men and women, whose names occur to us, have suffered, and probably died (too early) because of this seemingly innocent habit, which is—I contend—worse in its effect when combined with a light, simple and comparatively “pure” diet.

The person who is already eating four times his need of protein may not mind if half of it is daily destroyed by tea or coffee. But the person who is eating just the right amount will hear of it sooner or later. The thick-skinned man will not suffer so very poignantly if his teacup teaches him an artificial sensitiveness for a while; but the “vegetarian,” who is already almost super-sensitive, will feel the woes of the world and of himself when tea adds its contribution of hyperæsthesia.

We ought to get control of ourselves a little more. Having achieved that control, let us see that we *use* it, and do not just sit still or

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

do our valuable exercises in private and not bother about the world. What use is our self control if we cannot control our environment or even the world to some extent, and teach it its business, which it is apt to neglect for folly and fury?

To help us to gain the necessary self-control and the power beyond that of humbly leading the world, this is a useful step, this control, and if possible this discontinuance, of the habit of Tea

## THE SLAVEY

Oldish stout woman panting and talking,  
With the wide, heavy tray,  
I think you would rather be out and walking,  
This fresh, sunny day  
For London has thuddings on the road in the  
morning  
And the park there has beckonings through  
the mist and thin trees  
And Spring in the sky is not — scolding and  
scorning  
Dirt, and dinners and breakfasts and teas

TO ONE OF THE LITTLE-ACKNOWLEDGED GREAT MEN OF HIS TIME.\*

What can I say to you that is not trite,  
Conventional Wordsworthian echoings,  
My comrade and my father in the law  
That hates all laws of hate and will destroy  
them?

What can I say that sounds not insincere  
To your self-shying and discriminate mind?  
I do not say it to your mind so much  
As to the minds, half-tutored by their hearts,  
Of stupid blood-red days that heard not you.  
My friend, who never over-warmed a word  
Of friendly vacant phrase, yet spoke so much  
Into my oft-uncomprehending ear,  
And changed my heart's light from a hope to  
faith;

I cannot make that ground for boastful praise.  
Nor that you blest my partnership with one  
Who fights the same lost battle, always won—  
Won in the basic pillars of all life,  
And won when, sometime, they are bright in  
day.

\* H S Salt.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

Take this message, father dear,  
From the leafings trodden here  
We who in the earth are crushed  
Back to darkness are not hushed  
We were young and we are dead—  
Shaken heart and stricken head—  
And the boot that loathed and spurned  
Passes on and has not turned  
We were weak, and it was great,  
Walking on a task of State  
We were weeds and it was lord,  
And down its leg there swung a sword  
Father, it will cheer your eye  
Knowing we were glad to die  
Nothing harmed us nothing pained,  
Only one thing could have stained—  
If before our life was dead  
One drop had refreshed us—red  
From the guilty foot o'erhead

[1917]

## THE HUMANE DIET.

No poetry in our Cause? No stuff of song  
In this our gospel crying against blood?  
Might we as soon make sculpture out of  
mud,  
Or drum to battle on a dinner-gong?  
No ! There is poetry in *all* strife with wrong !  
No ! There is poetry in the unopened bud ;  
And in the common rain that feeds the flood,  
And in the humblest help that makes us strong.  
No dearth of song for who have heart to sing  
Of coming time, when the last bolt be  
hurled—  
(For this far good must our beginnings bring)—  
When War's red flag shall rest for ever  
furled,  
When something of a fresh immortal Spring,  
And love, and power, and wisdom hold the  
world !

## A DEATH'S HEAD

This evening I saw a sight which ought to be forbidden by law. I saw a woman wearing a death's head. She was not doing this for a bet or a joke, the death's head was in fact, what she possessed in the place of a living human countenance. I have nothing more to say about her, except that she wore this terrible substitute for a woman's face. I have no story to tell about her for I do not know whence she came nor whither she was going. I do not know who she was, but I know what she was. I could see at once, when I caught sight of her, that whatever else she was—whether she was a charwoman or an ex-charwoman a beggar or a rag gatherer—she was, at any rate this. She was the most frightful condemnation of the British people, and indeed, of all Christendom and indeed, of human life on the earth that I have ever seen. There may be worse faces, there seemed no sin or appalling disease upon her saffron coloured skin and even in her deep gulfed



## A DEATH'S HEAD.

cheeks and mournful eyes. But there was what is worse than disease, and nearly as bad as any sin; there was despair and age-long suffering. She was evidently an old woman, perhaps 65 years old, who had not yet received her old age pension. She had climbed a series of tall stairs, and had received a series of stares just as lofty, and refusals and failures. It is absolutely commonplace. Women and men of all ages are doing this and failing to get their absurd pittance of charity, every night, in almost every street of every town. But if that woman's sigh, before she got the coin and afterwards, and her ghastly face—yet a human face, with something soft and mother-like under the yellow skin—if these things are trivial in the eyes of the British people, and if her despair and years of unhealthy toil seem trivial; and if womanhood in the extremity of the face of death, with all her gifts drained and dried out of her, seems trivial to the people of this race, then the race is run.

## THE FALLEN MAN

The fallen man fears the throng  
He has done wrong he has done wrong  
Through the lamp lit damp, his feet  
Fall and falter down a street  
He is drunk, has drunk his love  
He has spent the sun above

He has misburnt the sun's oil,  
Which was his for joy for toil  
He might have been a priest instead  
With a white face and lifted head,  
Lit the little lamps when day was done,  
And carried in his hand the sun  
He might have worked with honest wood,  
And carried on his back a rood

## PARTING TO MEET

He fought the Devil for her soul  
Oh weary fight! Oh tyrant wings!  
And all the night was black as coal  
And thronged with quick imaginings  
His life was dead before the morn  
But ah! how gold the clouds do seem!  
Sing parting birds we both are born  
And wakened from a dreadful dream! "

## GENERAL CONTRITION.

### A FREEHAND SONNET.

I know not if my heart is duty-blind,  
Or black with blood, or deaf with egotism;  
For water darkens in a rock's abysm,  
And, love in deepest hue we may not find.  
Perhaps love to itself is colour-blind,  
Thinking and thinking through its shining  
prism,  
Till rose and blue become blank egotism,  
And bleeding seems unheeding of mankind.

But now to man I make my deep contrition;  
And then to each I weep for his condition;  
And then to all I weep with, I repent.  
Have mercy on the sins of my condition;  
Forgive the weakness and the fickle vision.  
Accept the truth, the sign, the testament.

## MY SON

Into the wide pale ocean, into the deep white  
sky,

I sent a bird from my bosom, I sent a ship  
to go

The width of the grey world wonder was not  
more proud than I,

And the waves afar like my heart at home,  
beat bravely to and fro

Into the heart of darkness into the death of  
night

I loosed the heart of my heart's love, the  
second birth of my soul

O that the sea that drowned, and the angry  
mist of night

Had stunned and stilled the weak shell here  
and crushed the part to whole

A shell on the long sands lying in a shiver  
of dun, dim light

What is a sick shell doing? Why is it left  
alone?

## MY SON.

I said : The sky is heaven, and the sea is the  
last of fight,  
And the sick shell lying, drying, is a little  
brittle stone.  
But I could not still the search of the sky,  
nor the lifeless ocean's moan.  
My son !

## THE AGENT PROVOCATEUR.\*

I stands up in my place and says  
"I move that we be armed."  
And for a moment every face  
All round me was alarmed;  
And every boy looked half invited  
And half afraid and half delighted.  
  
I stands up in my place and points  
At Ollick, who was cute,  
And says (obscure)—"The Lord anoi  
One man, and one He'll shoot.  
I don't name any individual,  
But *somebody* is going to kid you all.

\*This character belongs to the "revolutionary" period,  
1918—1925

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

Lot! They was like a lot o' sheep,

A lot o' lambkins wild!

At first I trembled—seemed too cheap

To captivate a child!

And then I learned to smile and frown,

And *anything* you like went down

Ha ha ha! It's an awful game

The lambs to slaughter go

And Ollick's such a funny name—

Did Ollick frolic to?

I saw them oust that man, and he

With a rueful face quite sad to see

So that was Ollick He was cute

And there was Brother Stokes

Who knew the right end of a boot

For all his frequent jokes

And he attempts the boot for me

To which I strongly disagree

I has my eye on Mr Stokes,

Says I just quiet like,

Talking to one and other blokes

' Stokes is against this strike

Stokes is against our helping you

' But Rae and Thomson's standing true

## THE AGENT PROVOCATEUR.

"Now," I continues, "as for Rae,

"He's true, as true as steel"—

(And that *was* true, for he's like day

As anyone could feel).

They *had* to believe me regarding Rae;

And then I adds—"Will Stokes betray?"

Play the one off on the other,

Be the boldest, don't delay,

Leap in quickly on your "Brother"—

Whisper "Yes, but who'll betray?"

Chat beside the stove and reason—

"Unfortunately, there's always treason."

That's the way it's done

And it's really full of fun;

And I laughs and laughs to think

How nearly I went clink.

But they takes it all in—sip!

If you've got the gift of lip.

And you gets up in your place

And cries hotly—"This is a disgrace!"

And cries, turning round and shouting,

"Are we cringing, are we doubting?

"Are we weaker than the soldier?

"We're not ready yet—I told yer!

"Who forgets? and who's alarmed?

"I move that we be armed!"

\*

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\*

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

Gently, silently, out o' the night

Comes a face, and a dozen behind  
Faces and figures young and slight—

(Faces only made out of me mind !)  
Slowly, quietly, bleeding to death,

They points and points like theatre ghosts  
But I knows they isn't made of breath

And blood and bones they only boasts  
They boasts and laughs and frowns as once  
When they met in their clubs and talked of  
fight

And of spies and ' the Government's  
myrmidons

And me sitting wondering if I was white

Oh, I know ye now, I've seen ye before !

Take your sick young cheeks away  
Your blood was predestined before

With that of Ollick and Tom and Rae  
Goodbye goodbye ah, comrades all,  
It rent my heart when your bodies fall !

But an old man needs the use of his body

As well as a young man—shame it seems  
An old man needs his winter toddy

And here it steams here it steams !  
An old man suffers (and does) things bloody  
And you are dreams—dreams !



## THE PRIME MINISTER'S DAY.

You ! Stop that motor ! You !

You, popular idol, with the smile :  
I want your blood—oh, nothing new,  
It's an old story this long while.  
I am a mother, rich and old,  
You could not buy my love with gold,  
My son had it manifold.

My son had my love, and he  
Is in the red clay, under others :  
And you, whose hair is grey, but free,  
Have greyed, and bound the hair of  
mothers :  
Greyed it with fear, and divers doubt,  
Greyed it, and made it all fall out,  
I don't care ; but my son—I'll shout !

I'll shout and drown your hack's hurrahs ;  
You'll listen and your car will stop.  
The balconies have begonias,  
And the cupola has flags atop.  
But my heart cries " Shame ! "  
I call you by name.  
You are to blame.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

Peace? There is none Peace is dead  
You killed her over my bleeding son  
And God will see your smile is red  
You are undone, you are undone!  
God have mercy on all?  
But on you? I hear him call  
Behold his funeral!

## IN LIEU OF PRAYER

Beautiful, and bright, and good—  
I battled with and wronged and sinned  
against  
Stand in the field grey, beside the town,  
And remember all, or much of it, alone  
And thank the Soul of Love who gave,  
Who when love's other hour comes will  
recall  
Surely goodness and mercy have followed me  
All the days of my life

## TO SOLDIERS OF CONSCIENCE AND OF WAR.

To you, lads, who wait, daily renewing  
Patience of heart, day by day :  
In the cells, where dwells the half-dark grey,  
And the dark, deep-dyed, at the end of day,  
And the new day, waste and rust renewing,

To you, lads, who struck in the wild disaster,  
And fell, and fall, day by day :  
In the shells' and hell's confused array ;  
And the dark unfathomed, at breaking day ;  
The new day, and the old disaster !

To both united, forlorn brothers,  
Worthy of the time, day by day :  
In the cells', in the shells', accursèd sway,  
And the dark that slowly looks to day :  
Brothers !

1917.

# THE SYNDICALIST.

A PLAY.

*Written in May, 1914.*

## LIST OF CHARACTERS.

LORD PORTEOUS : *Home Secrètary, a member of the Radical Conservative Government.*

LADY PORTEOUS : *Vice-President of an Anti-Suffrage Society.*

N. M. MURRAY ("Pat" Murray), Syndicalist speaker. He was born a "Gentleman," and, indeed, a remote relation of Lord P., but quarrelled with his environment and became an impoverished Socialist Agitator.

NORAH MURRAY (*née* Douglas), his wife, a Suffragette.

JOAN MULLER : *Servant of Lady Porteous.*

MRS. WATCHET : *Landlady of Murray.*

*Old man, Young man, Policeman, etc.*

# THE SYNDICALIST.

## A PLAY.

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### SCENE I.—A CORNER OF TRAFALGAR SQUARE..

*Summer, Saturday afternoon. NORMAN MACK MURRAY (often called " Pat " Murray), the Syndicalist open-air agitator, is speaking to a group. People pass along shortly; only about twelve men, and three women, remain the whole time.*

*Murray is a smallish young man, untidily dressed, speaking vigorously, with a slight Irish accent. ' ,*

MURRAY (*shouting*).—Oh, you may pass along there, but the time will come when you will have to stay. You will have to wait for crowds that will gather round these statues of the great or the little heroes of the past. You will have to—

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

A VOICE (*huskily*) —Steady on! Wot abaht Gawd n?

MURRAY —General Gordon would not have advised the mischievous state of social affairs in which we find ourselves to-day. General Gordon worked for the poor. In his day, and with the little light of his time, in the small ways that his class prejudices would allow him he fought for the broken and the starved. I say that round his statue some day, and terribly soon the throng will gather so thick that you will not easily pass along. (*The crowd thickens as his voice rings forth*) There will be cries for food! There will be threats and threats certain of fulfilment. There have been such but there will be threats and resolves that have never been before. They will shake the State. (*Pointing high*) You see Lord Porteous the Home Secretary, sitting there aloft on his high perch in Parliament, declaring that the Railway Strike will dry up like—he likened it to a lake in Italy he did which has shrunk away. He said that the Motor Cab Strike had failed. The taxi men failed—yes! because of foul play.

A YOUNG MAN —Dirty treachery! Dirty French treachery.

MURRAY —Yes and I'm coming to that





## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

pace with me—you never do, and you lie and write down any lies you choose and call them mine I say I can prove every tittle of what I affirm I have come here under stress of emotion I know facts about Ernib, that far away Argyllshire village which would burn up Lord Porteous government and himself as a politician

In this old Highland sporran here (*waving a black sporran with thinned hair tassels*)—there are proofs of everything I shall say I will not speak more of it to day, because I cannot afford to go to gaol at this juncture, even though I am innocent, even though I have all the evidence necessary for the strongest denunciations and the policeman is doing his jackal work I must remain free till after the end of the week and then I shall tell you the worst that I know It will blast this terrible Government to pieces There is said to be a general election coming within a month let it come Lord Home and Lord Porteous will not survive it But elections are of little moment to me for you will never carry the revolutionary reforms which the people need while men hang on votes as they might snatch at straws or twigs as they fall over a precipice

## THE SYNDICALIST.

The workers of the world must unite. The strike is our weapon. I lift it (*he brandishes the sporran over his head*)—in my right hand and call to you—you few, or you who may be many, that listen to me this shining day. The birds are on these branches, the sunlight is over the city square: the statues of the dead heroes are gilded. The stone faces of tyrants shall be blasted like snow men with our fists; we will not wait for the sun to melt and scatter them away!

(*He finishes, and is loudly cheered. Cries of "Go on!" "Go on!" The open-air chairman, a short, thick man, interposes and says—*)

THE CHAIRMAN. — Comrades, men and gentlemen. Our friend Pat Murray has said enough. He will later say more. Our friend is unwell. We all know the strain through which he has been going of late. Let us spare him and be more merciful to him than those who have lately released him from prison. I beg you to listen to Mr. Meekin this afternoon, and Murray will address you again when he feels fitter, either now or—

(*Disturbance. Cries of "Oh!" "What's up?" Murray is seen to fall. The chairman*

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

raises him staring into his white face. A loud gentlemanly, authoritative voice, issuing from the tall man in the crush hat, says "Give him a box! There is some laughter at this unexpected voice. The general noise is one of variously voiced concern. Behind the crowd as throughout the whole meeting, the long variegated drone and occasional roar of traffic sounds.)

THE TALL PATRICIAN (turning to a companion a smaller fair haired man—like a paid secretary)—Shouldn't have said that. But these obtuse fools do everything wrong. You know we had better go out of this now.

HIS COMPANION (a detective)—I couldn't have any idea that you were going to be so insulted. I should never have come with you, sir. We ought never to have come. And I ought to have anticipated this.

LORD PORTEOUS—Let's go now. He's not good for much more gas just now. Oxygen's more in his line now. Let's go along this way.

MURRAY (staggering up, visible through the spectators)—Where's my wife?

(A woman is clasping him round the breast from behind. She is young, dark pale, poorly

## THE SYNDICALIST.

*but somewhat prettily dressed, with a scarlet poppy in a black hat.)*

HIS WIFE, NORAH (*from behind him, looking round into his face and hugging him, and keeping him from walking forward too venturesomely*).—Here I am, Norman. What a question! Now, do sit down a bit; wait a little; don't hurry up; what's the use? We'll go when the crowd clears away a bit. (*To the crowd.*) Why in the living earth don't you go? Can't you see we've got to sit here a while? Why the Devil don't you go?

(A VOICE.—She said "Devil!")

CHAIRMAN.—Mrs. Murray—I should say, Miss Douglas—wants you to go, and, as she has well said, you ought to take the hint and go quietly, as I have no doubt you will courteously do. We are most of us comrades and friends, and we love Murray, and we must have him well. There's an end of it. My comrade Mr. French and I will see that Murray gets home all right.

One of the BYSTANDERS.—That's his wife.

ANOTHER.—I thought he said "Miss?"

THE FIRST.—Yes, but she's simply called that because she's a Suffragist. They're married. Everybody knows Pat Murray's married.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

Why I was at the wedding myself in Marylebone registry Ain't she a bright one? "

THE OTHER —She's bright Er cheeks is bright too, or they was when I come up but she is pale now (*They move off*)

Another BYSTANDER —Like an apple! (*He moves off*)

(*A telegraph boy crossing that corner of the square stands to look*)

CHAIRMAN (*jogged by Norah*) —Here, what you staring at? Get about your business! Government services!

A WOMAN (*who has been standing behind the chairman offering a white silk handkerchief several times, and murmuring sympathetically*) —Government servants all over! Get about your business!

(*The boy moves on*)

NORAH —Can you walk now do you think, Norman?

MURRAY —All right I'll try This dashed collapsibility of mine, you know! Norah listen! Stoop down a bit dearest

NORAH —Don't talk any more, dear What is it?

MURRAY —Listen It's these eggs at lunch

## THE SYNDICALIST.

I tell you I mustn't eat eggs again. It's brutal. I faint, or so, nearly every afternoon.

CHAIRMAN.—You know, Pat, I think it's that vegetarian diet of yours that throws you out. However, it's no good talking. Now do try, to walk a bit, old man—Comrade! That's better. Now! First the heel and then the toe! Oh, you're all ra-ight. Come on, we'll get on a 'bus.

POLICEMAN (*from behind*).—Take 'im down Charing Cross tube. W'ere do you want to go. 'Ackney?

CHAIR.—No. Kentish Town.

MURRAY.—For God's sake keep me out of the tube! I can't stand it. Norah!

NORAH.—Yes, Pat?

MURRAY.—Go by 'bus! Go by 'bus! I need air.

NORAH.—All right! Of course we will. Don't be worried. It's all right (*pressing his hand*). God bless you, sweetheart.

MURRAY.—D'you know, I have a feeling Lord Porteous was listening to me. He was that tall man in the squash hat and overcoat. (*He makes a clicking noise in his throat, as he always does when he fears collapse.*) Anyhow, he'll hear worse than that. I was worked up to it. . . However (*thoughtfully*), let's have

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

no more eggs, Norah, its useless We must get our protein some other way

NORAH —Protein, dear! Its little protein you get I'm thinking Come on to the 'bus, gently

*(They all move off, Murray hobbling slightly and repeating the clicking noise in his throat)*

POLICEMAN —General Gordon wasn't afraid of the tube

*(Curtain)*

# THE SYNDICALIST.

## SCENE II.

*A dismal room, over a dingy bookseller's shop.*

*The window is opposite the audience, large, loose-looking, dusty. There is a long table in the middle of the room, without a cloth, but covered with Murray's papers. A dozen books are round him on the floor. Few of them have covers, all of them are cheap. There are no curtains, of course, at the window. There is no wallpaper, except a single long narrow strip on the left side of the window. The rest of the wall is stained lemon-yellow, but very dirty over that. A stretcher bed is set up against one side wall. The bedding is piled in a corner untidily. The fireplace to the right has some coal, still red, but the scuttle alongside is empty. A bleak, torn sofa is against the same wall as the stretcher bed. Norah's clothes are bundled on this. A saucepan is in the grate. There is a strong, strong smell of burning lentils, mixed with tobacco smoke. MURRAY, smoking a penny cherrywood pipe, the stem of which seems half-eaten, sits with his back to the fire. He throws his fingers through*



## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

*I is long I air* NORAH is on her knees in front of the fire She jumps up screaming slightly

NORAH —Oh !

MURRAY —What the——

NORAH —Cinders ! All over the hearth rug It's the same yesterday to day and for ever It's intolerable (Pause)

MURRAY —Don't tolerate it Lift up the cinder (Pause) Put it in the fireplace (Pause) That's where cinders ought to go

NORAH —I'm talking seriously The fact is the simple fact Norman that you're wrecking my life

MURRAY —Go on ! Why me ?

NORAH —I didn't say you I said that my life was intolerable I never leave the house or never without excruciating torture of shame You don't understand shame ! You never did ! You always seem to have that moral quality—I've no doubt it is a virtue—but it's hard on people who are not strong in that way You have an extraordinary negative courage

MURRAY —Gwen !

NORAH —What ?

MURRAY —Gwen !

NORAH —I won't Gwen You say Gwen

## THE SYNDICALIST.

when you want me to be silent, because you feel I'm telling the truth. I am never to speak out. I'm always to put a stopper on myself. It simply leads to deception. If you *want* me to deceive you, you are simply going the right way about it. Is that what you want?

MURRAY.—I want to be quiet. We agreed that when we wanted to be quiet we'd say Gwen.

NORAH.—All right, Gwen. Only don't say I didn't warn you, if I break down. It's an insufferable position, and the sooner I get new clothes—even if it's only 7s. 6d., the sooner I escape from the risk of madness, that's all. Gwen.

MURRAY.—Look here, Nessie. I needn't go over the whole ground again. I tell you repeatedly I can't change it. You know I can't change it. You know how everything stands. We never have enough money—

NORAH.—Gwen !

MURRAY.—We never have enough money left when we've paid this blamed bill, and paid Ox's instalment—

NORAH.—Gwen ! Gwen !!

MURRAY.—Of course, as a matter of fact, I know we never do pay Ox's instalment. But anyhow, he's got almost all his furniture back

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

now, and I don't see that it was much the worse—

NORAH—Gwen Gwen Gwen!

MURRAY—All right! You'd think there was a woman in the room

NORAH—There is—me! But there isn't a man. At least it isn't manly to taunt me

MURRAY—I didn't taunt. I said we couldn't pay our way. We ought to leave this house

NORAH—Yes, and go to—where? Some slum?

MURRAY—It's a slum already if you come to that. If we can once pay our way—if we can do as Mr Micawber advises keep to the right side—it'll make all the difference

NORAH—Micawber! You're all out of date! We have got to dress

MURRAY—You do dress. What have you got on the usual things isn't it—bodice and skirt?

NORAH—Yes the usual ones. The usual 'bodice' (*with a laugh*) aged four, the usual skirt aged ten. The usual joke. The usual mockery. The usual sympathy. The usual husband

MURRAY—If you don't like your husband, you ought to select another

NORAH—I like him to be himself. It's not

## THE SYNDICALIST.

being yourself to deliberately blind yourself to the necessity of looking decent. Everybody judges us by it. Everybody who comes to see us sees piggery and disgrace and despair! (*flinging down the tongs with a clatter.*)

MURRAY.—No one comes to see us.

NORAH.—Because I can't ask them.

MURRAY.—They wouldn't come, anyhow, to see bears and bearesses.

NORAH.—I find every woman I pass looks at my feet. Shoes like bits of sopping cardboard, all split at the sides.

MURRAY.—Your feet are all right. They are really like mice—what is it old Suckling says? —“in and out.”

NORAH.—Everybody thinks you don't respect me.

MURRAY.—Who cares what they think? I do respect you—with reservations. I don't respect *them*.

(*A knock. Enter an old woman, fat and small.*)

MRS. WATCHET.—Coal, ma'am?

NORAH.—Oh, no, thanks. Well, we might. But really you must not lend us any more coal, Mrs. Watchet. Norrie, you *must* remember to order coal, won't you?

MRS. W. (*putting on coal*).—There was a

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

young man called this afternoon—no, yesterday afternoon I should have told you It was when you were at the British Museum Library

MURRAY—Oh yes of course As a matter of fact we were at a lecture in Trafalgar Square

NORAH—What?

MRS W—Mrs Murray said the Library—that's why I said library Of course I don't know anything about it It's just as it comes A young man came about coal he said and he left a note (*Parse*) He said he would call again

MURRAY—Oh, indeed?

MRS W (*looking out of the window*)—There he is, sir

MURRAY—I can't see I'm so blooming shortsighted And I can't get my new glasses you know because—because my old ones were broken

NORAH—It's from Coaster's That's the same young man again I told him all about it He ought to have sent the three hundred weght

MRS W (*withdrawing*)—Yes ma'am Should I show him in ma'am? Just so, ma'am

## THE SYNDICALIST.

NORAH.—Tell him to come again on Saturday. The League pays you this Saturday, doesn't it?

MURRAY.—Now Norah, I repeatedly explain the Syndicalist League is acting on its own principles just now and striking. I haven't been paid for a month. It's next Saturday they promise, not this.

NORAH.—Oh, all right. The fact is the poor chaps need cash, I suppose, like the rest of us. (*Young man is shown up.*)

Y. MAN (*tall; smiling at first, then stern*).—Mr. Murray, here is an account for 6s 3d., to coal and postages. It has been three times rendered. You left no address. I went over to your former address, and found you had gone and the address was not known. \*

MURRAY.—My address is Trafalgar Square.

NORAH.—My husband is always out, busy. I got the letter. It didn't seem immediate. We have been awfully bothered. We are both very busy every day.

Y. MAN.—Perfectly, ma'am. Business is business. If you will kindly discharge the account now it will be a favour.

MURRAY.—We can't. You must wait.

Y. MAN.—It's impossible. I have strict

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

orders to collect the debt at once It has stood since last November

MURRAY —Steady on! January, wasn't it?

Y MAN (opening papers) —It was rendered on November 28th, December 15th, December 30th, having no answer, I called at Islington and found you had left your quarters there kindly pay it now The delay since January has been due to clemency on the part of the firm, and partly to the fact that I've had difficulty in ascertaining your precise address

MURRAY —Wh., I thought everybody knew me All the tradesmen and cadgers seem to come here

NORAH —Gwen

Y MAN (suspiciously looking round) —I beg pardon ma'am!

NORAH —It's a word my husband and I use when we want to remind each other not to be irrelevant I forget how it originated I think we used to pretend there was a house maid called Gwendoline listening wasn't that it?

MURRAY —Something of that sort

NORAH —Now, Mr —

Y MAN —Richards

NORAH —Mr Richards please send in your account again in due course by the usual

## THE SYNDICALIST.

penny-post. It is rather unusual to spring it upon us in this way.

Y. MAN.—Spring it! W'y, it's Spring, Summer and Autumn it!

NORAH (*laughing*).—All right. But really, it'll be all right. Send it along and my husband will attend to it at once. He's busy.

MURRAY.—Send it on! Can't you see we are busy? (*Pointing to the scuttle*). We've coal enough just now, but we'll need more. When you send in your account, send us a list of prices too. Only for small amounts. In summer one only wants a hundredweight at a time.

Y. MAN.—It's all the same, whatever the amount. Now, sir, will you pay this account at once?

MURRAY.—When you send it in properly. Kindly go now.

Y. MAN (*goes, saying*).—I shall call to-morrow afternoon, with Mr. Coaster, when I have consulted him. The matter is growing rather a serious one, you know, sir. Good-day, sir.

NORAH.—The ass! The matter 'is growing rather serious!

MURRAY.—Slightly so!



## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

(They laugh tremendously and run into each other's arms)

NORAH — But it is so. We can't live like this. I'm getting quite hysterical.

MURRAY — I know. So am I for that matter. But we've done six months of it.

NORAH — The more reason to do no more.

MURRAY — I don't want to commit suicide.

NORAH — Neither do I. But why not if it comes to that? I suppose one simply passes on to another plane as the theosophists say, it will be much the same.

MURRAY — And the coil chap too, I suppose.

NORAH — No. I imagine he wouldn't be at home there. He would need cuffs and collar to be happy or at least to be himself. He'd be rendering accounts which is impossible.

MURRAY — Why impossible? I thought everything was exactly the same on the astral plane. Hallo there's the post.

(Knocking. Enter Mrs Watchet handing two letters. She withdraws.)

MURRAY — God bless.

NORAH — Now wish Norman. It's our only chance.

MURRAY (breaking open his letter) — From Lord Porteous. Hallo invitation! I'm to go

## THE SYNDICALIST.

to him in Park Lane on Tuesday. That's his house, is it? Tuesday—that's the day after to-morrow, isn't it?

NORAH.—I don't know. How extraordinary!

MURRAY.—It's not extraordinary at all in a blood relation. He's an uncle. My father always called it "uncle," though, 'of course, it's remoter than that, or I should have a title myself.

NORAH.—You ought to have a title. You might have had if you hadn't gone and slunk out of the family circle. Why the *deuce* didn't you stay and be respectable and aristocratic?

MURRAY.—I wasn't aristocratic. I was really only the third cousin by marriage. And as a matter of fact I didn't retire or slink, as you very well know. I simply got the go-by when I started as a Socialist.

NORAH.—Well, you might have become a Labour M.P., or something that would bring you in a passable living. I can never understand why you became a Syndicalist. It's utterly unfashionable—and unfinancial.

MURRAY.—What about Suffrage, if it comes to that?

NORAH.—Gwen. Let me open my letter.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c.

(*She does*) Hullo, forwarded from the Woman's League? To Miss NORAH DOUGLAS! How funny the "to" looks. Mercy! It's from Lady Porteous! She wants me to come and see her privately, at tea, to-morrow at four or so. Quite like a human woman. Quite a nice note, look Norman! It's unfortunate that all my clothes are strips of sack-cloth.

MURRAY—She may help to make them more. Can't you borrow something, borrow some more money and go? What about the sofa? Pawn the sofa!

NORAH—Belonging to Or and Co. That would be ungentlemanly. Besides, it would be illegal and felonious. Let's be more serious, Norman. Nothing can be done now. Too late, as usual by six months or so.

MURRAY—Don't say that. Let's pawn the sofa. Let's sell it. I know a man or a shop (that wee Jew along Junction Road) who will possibly buy it. It's the best we can do and it's the last thing available, isn't it?

NORAH—Yes.

MURRAY—All right. Go on. Let's go. *I'll go (tossing his papers aside)*

NORAH—Norman!

MURRAY—Yes?

## THE SYNDICALIST.

NORAH.—Norman, old man! If we can't do this, if we can't get anything to go with, and if we can't get anything out of her, and him—a situation for you or for me—there are lot's of them. Lord Porteous must know—Lady Porteous must be able—if nothing comes . . . we'll have to go . . . won't we?

MURRAY.—Go?

NORAH.—You know. Die, won't we?

MURRAY (*slowly*).—I'm afraid so. No; what's the use? After all, one loves life, Norah dear.

NORAH.—Yes, life—but not this.

MURRAY.—All right.

BOTH (*together*).—Let's go.

BOTH (*together*).—Where?

BOTH (*together*).—To the Porteous's!

(*Curtain.*)

# THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

## SCENE III —PARK LANE

*Lord Porteous's house the blue parlour. This room is very beautifully coloured. Almost everything is of a light sky colour or darker azure. The room is not too full of furniture—a light writing table in the window lit with sunshine and facing the greenery of trees and grass—a few light chairs—a bookcase gleaming with aunts' little leather editions on the walls little but one well framed replica of a Murillo madonna. Some bright covered new books—the Spectator the Art Journal and the Oriental Review, lie on another small table. A copy of Will Dyson's cartoons is open on the tea table which is simply furnished with tea set silver cake dishes and a large sized, almost plebeian looking plate of meringues. There is no manservant or maid servant in attendance. They have been relieved from their duty after bringing in tea and handing the first cups. Lord Porteous is*

## THE SYNDICALIST.

*on his legs before the fireplace. Lady P. is seated at the teapot, opposite her humble visitor, Mrs. Murray; Murray, also standing, is waiting for his wife's cup.*

LADY P.—Now, dear, you will have another? China, you know.

LORD P.—Ha, ha! My wife is always a little timid about vegetarian friends. You food-reforming people are so strong against strong tea, aren't you?

NORAH.—Oh, really, Norman and I take everything of that sort—tea, coffee, eggs and cheese.

LADY P.—Do you never take meat?

MURRAY.—Yes, when we can get it.

NORAH.—Oh, you know, there are all sorts of vegetarian meats and things. We eat those.

LORD P.—I know. Nut-meats. Nutty chops. Lentil loin—and so forth. Harriet and I have had our vegetarian days too, you see—our salad days, as it were. About twenty years ago, wasn't it?

LADY P.—You know best, doubtless. So far as I remember it was you who did most of the experimenting. I sat and waited till you were ready to go on to the club. (*Turning to NORAH.*) You see, we first looked in

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

at some Food Reform Cafe, just as an experiment, and then, after a taste Bob was always ready to accept any pretext for another dinner.

LORD P —Well, I had a heavy strain at that time. Trying to get into Parliament. That ordeal has yet to come in your case Norman?

MURRAY —I am really a Syndicalist you see, I disbelieve in Parliamentary Institutions. In fact, I think them a lot of rot—as it were.

LORD P —Oh, reconsider that! You work through the Unions. Well now, I'm Home Secretary. I know a hundred to one what Trade Unionism means. But my experience is all against mere Unionism—mere strikes. Strikes work, I don't deny. They do the deuce of a lot of work. They force the hand of tyrannical masters and heaven knows there are many such. Why I have them among my friends. I argue with them. But strikes are futile, aren't they, if the parliamentary power of wielding soldiers is brought to bear against the workers. Why, I have had to do that myself, you know —Excuse me talking so long, by the by will you? House of Lords practice, you know!

MURRAY —Oh, go on please explain your position. I've often wanted to know.

NORAH —We want to understand you. You

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see, we are both against you. I am for Women's Suffrage and Norman is for the working class.

MURRAY.—Being in a sense a member of it. You see, I am *out* of work at present.

LORD P.—Is that so? Well, don't let general talk carry us away from practical needs. You know, Norman (I may call you Norman, mayn't I? Of course; because we are approximately cousins, I believe). You must believe that I will do anything in my power to find you a reasonable position. You have gifts. Did I tell you that I heard your speech in Trafalgar Square the other day. It was great. Keep it up. But, Norman boy, take an old politician's advice, and don't over-reach. That sounds censorious; I mean, don't be too damning. Let us off a bit. We're all mortal. We're all struggling. God help you—it's not a phrase for a tea-table, but pardon—believe me, my boy, the oldest stager amongst us is a sore-hearted struggler, often, with tears in his eyes. We're baffled. What can we *do*? The place is hedged about with thickets. I can't persuade my own household. You know what Bernard Shaw says—I can't persuade my own butler. The very working class itself is not a tenth part converted. I'm



## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

a Socialist myself I would go any length, within reason, towards granting *(he inflates himself)* a full and adequate measure of the means of livelihood to every child born in the State

Protect parental responsibility of course But what is it? There is no responsibility—there can be no responsibility There ought to be no responsibility in some homes There is no chance The whole environment is poisoned I know it as well as you do The only chance is for the State machinery to open out these crushed places of our social scheme It must drive along like a snow plough on the railway But then, on the other hand we must proceed sensibly, scientifically, not head long

LADY P —Bob, don't you think you are talking too much, even for your own good? You have left that scone untouched

LORD P —This scone is like humanity, lying waste I take it, slit it, butter it, and you see! It is as if a new value came into it Put the great, dull idle artificially stifled latent, crude unled undeveloped working class into the hands of powerful men—real leaders, real teachers, real devotees—and it will be *(h'm)*

## THE SYNDICALIST.

(*h'm*) it will become the food of a new race, the nucleus of a new humanity.

MURRAY.—Like the scone.—Yes, but what if the scone goes down and never reappears? What if the scone is in the hands of a great patrician and never escapes alive again out of his mouth?

LORD P.—Patrician? No, I mean a plebeian. I mean, that is, a man of the people. A real leader of them, not perhaps born one of them, but become one. Who understands their potentialities, who feels their woes, who has been prepared by Providence for their leadership, who has been taught by self-imposed privations, by loss of goods and collapse of fortune, to comprehend and incarnate all their wrongs. You are such a man, Norman!

NORAH.—Yes, he is.

LADY P.—Indeed he is.

A VOICE BEHIND.—He is!

MURRAY.—Who's that?

LADY P.—I think it must be my maid, Joan. She says she is a Syndicalist.

NORAH.—And a Suffragist. That's Joan Muller. Why, she's treasurer of a branch, I believe. She's a member of the Women's Lawless League.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

LADY P —The same I expect I suppose she told you she is my maid

NORAH —We are great friends It wasn't she who brought in the tea things?

LADY P —No that was Poole (*Raising her voice*) Joan! come in and let Mrs Murray see if she can identify you

(*Joan enters—a tall girl, gone perfectly grey all over her head but otherwise singularly youthful*)

JOAN —Good afternoon Mrs Murray I'm afraid I must give you the prefix before her Ladyship

NORAH —Yes it's Joan right enough

JOAN —Shall I remove the tea things my Lady?

LADY P —Leave the Marquis a cup Put a box of Turkish cigarettes and some fruit in the conservatory Mrs Murray and I will come in there

JOAN —Yes my Lady (*Withdraws*)

LADY P —Now Bob you and my cousin can have it out together I think you were beginning to get a little beyond my depth We two will take a little look at the flowers

(*Bowing half humorously, she and Norah exeunt*)

## THE SYNDICALIST.

LORD P. (*handing MURRAY a Pamphlet*).—There you have my views. That's a complete report of my last election speeches on social reform. It's dry, but not to a polemic like you. Read that and see what I believe.

MURRAY.—I read it when it came out. I had to sell it the other day—together with ten other books of speeches, and the total receipts were fivepence. I'm sorry to have had to part with it.

LORD P.—Yes? You like it?

MURRAY.—I feel that it stamps you—enables me to place you. You are a Radical Conservative. You believe in going to the root of things, seeking out the root of evil—and conserving it.

LORD P.—Good enough! No. But do you believe that a man like me, thinking the decent sort of thoughts I express in this book, could deserve the adjectives—and nouns—you apply to me in Trafalgar Square? You know I don't want to take legal proceedings against you.

MURRAY.—No, the truth might come out more fully. Besides, as yet, I've said nothing technically libellous, I believe. Presently I shall speak.

LORD P.—Why not now, if you have any-

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

thing to say? Say it now in this quiet room  
Be a cousin to me, Norman

MURRAY — I don't want to speak yet,  
because the Union wants me We have a  
project still incomplete If I go to prison  
before the end of this week—even on a false  
charge—that project (whatever it is it's not  
public property) may fail

LORD P —What Union?

MURRAY —The A S M P

LORD P (uncomprehending) —Indeed? Do  
they pay you?

MURRAY —All my pay is swallowed up by  
debt Lord Porteous, since I left the circle  
of respectability and distinction, I have had a  
wrestle with fate I don't deny it I have  
had a hard fight my wife has been my chief  
comfort The fight is for her and for  
syndicalism—that is the second solace

LORD P (abruptly) —I will assure you a  
living if you will leave me alone

MURRAY —What?

LORD P —You heard what I said No need  
to repeat it crudely it is a pertinent proposi-  
tion

(Pause)

MURRAY —You killed the people of Errith

## THE SYNDICALIST.

LORD P.—What sort of people? Ten old women, a boy (half dead already) and a cow. Do these stand in the way of freedom? Do these outweigh a democracy and a wife worth all the world?

MURRAY.—My wife is on *my* side.

LORD P.—Yes, but what's *your* side? Your wife supports Suffrage and Democracy and all that. Heaven knows she's been giving me proof at the Home Office of her suffrage ardour. I think she has three burnt golf greens to her credit.

MURRAY.—Four; perhaps.

LORD P.—And her Socialism is just as great, no doubt. But the question is, how is Socialism served? By starving its best brains into suicide? By throwing yourself and all the plans your brain holds down a precipice of hunger? You ate your scones like a ravening lion. You are a ravening lion. Do not die in the desert!

MURRAY.—What are your motives?

LORD P.—I told you I am a Socialist. Believe me or not. It sounds a likely paradox. It sounds like a Chesterton paradox, to say that I, living here in this sufficient house, the Home Secretary, am a Socialist, the friend of the poor. Friends of the poor need power.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

Let the enemies of the poor be as weak as they can let *them* waste let *them* dwindle let *them* even *starve*—for the good of mankind as a whole But the friends of the poor the Socialists, must be men of power, not weak not poor They may have *been* poor—it teaches But they must take what sinews of war come—and use them for warfare! It sounds supercilious it may even sound dubious, Murray but I will use you—I will use you I will use you—for my good work for it is good humbly and in its degree Will you take the chance? I want to help a friend Your father was a dear friend at one time

MURRAY —It was from my father that I got the facts about Errith And worse facts! You have no legal right—and, eternally, you have no moral right—to be Lord Porteous at all

LORD P —Oh that old story! (laughing) The ancient title deeds perverted by a lawyer! Why that dates back from the fifteenth century

MURRAY —I don't care where it dates from It makes you a robber

LORD P —It may have made my great great grandfather one for all I know but, after all, I'm only a receiver at the worst Still I don't

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think you should go telling everybody about it just now. People are so blindly influenced. They believe anything, and reason from it to anything. They might easily think it would affect the Home Office, and delegalise the police! Ha, ha! Now, listen, Murray, Norman. A general election comes on in a few weeks. My party *must* remain in power. Its work is essential to humanity. It is my tool. There are other men, as good or better than I, handling it. We must win. You, too, will be a valuable agent for Democracy, for the down-trodden. You, too, will serve, will lead. I'm rhetorical. But listen. Now do please remember your wife. Interpret Democracy in the wide sense in which a woman's subtle intuition understands it. You get a job of £500 a year which helps you, which helps your wife, which helps Democracy, which fulfils the aims of Trade Unionism, directly or indirectly. At the same time my party, to aid Democracy in its own clumsier, more roundabout way, returns to power. It is not calumniated—at least not by you! It is not attacked—by you—at least not directly, not with personal unsubstantiated—

MURRAY.—What!

LORD P.—Well, whether substantiated or



## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

not, with irrelevant and disproportionate infinitesimal tales about Errith. My name is not misused. My name and reputation continue to do their small, subtle services for the real people, the great wide numbers of the children of humanity. That's what I try for—stumbling and equivocating like everybody else—often forgetting my task, often seduced by indolence and fatigue and pessimism. Will you help me? Won't you help me if it means helping us all?

MURRAY—How much do you mean?

LORD P—£500 a year, a permanency.

MURRAY—What at? What's the work?

LORD P—Well, there's no work exactly. At least it is, in a sense, rather negative. You stay where you are. You remain a Trade Unionist, a member of the A W W P (he forgets). You speak. But if you like I could find a more positive sphere of activity.

MURRAY (wildly)—I won't take it!

LORD P—All right. Don't. But don't hurry. Don't rush into it or away! A great deal hangs on this. It is a simple undertaking from one man of gentlemanly honour to another, but it involves a great deal. Think about it. Ask your wife about it. Or if you don't like to depend on her—h'm h'm—in a

## THE SYNDICALIST.

matter where your own manhood should perhaps bear the whole responsibility—think it out for yourself.

MURRAY.—Give me a day to think it all over!

LORD P.—A week if you like!

MURRAY (*looking up, firmly*).—What guarantee have I got?

LORD P. (*as firmly, looking him steadily in the eye*).—The word of a gentleman and a man.

MURRAY.—And what have you?

LORD P.—The same.

MURRAY.—I'll do it!

(*He sinks forward in his chair and knocks over an empty cup into its saucer.*)

LORD P. (*goes to him, and holds him up, and soothingly caressing his back*). — Poor fellow! I believe the boy has fainted.

(*He stoops and places a strange, solemn kiss on Murray's forehead.*)

(*Curtain.*)

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c.

that time of the removal, and I think I was about off my head I would have lost a twenty pound note!

NORAH —How much was this?

MURRAY —It was a postal order for thirty shillings but there may be more!

NORAH —What d you mean?

MURRAY —Oh, I don't know The fact is Norah Lord Porteous has an appointment in view for me and I can foresee money

NORAH —What! Norrie! Dear chap! How much? What is it?

MURRAY —Och, I can't talk about it just now It's not fit for conversation (*laughing*) Peers money can't bring any good—can it, Norry?

NORAH —What's the matter with it? We need our clothes We need food Do you know, Norrie I had a terrible temptation myself this afternoon

MURRAY —What?

NORAH —Lady Porteous She took me into the conservatory and asked me—But look here what about your appointment? Tell me!

MURRAY —Not just now

NORAH —Would you rather not just now? Well is it a sure thing? Permanent?

MURRAY —Yes

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NORAH.—Thank the Lord for a new hat !

MURRAY.—Yes, several of them.

NORAH.—Or thank the Lord Porteous.

MURRAY.—Tell me about your temptation. What was it? Does she want you to marry her?

NORAH.—Not exactly. Be serious, for it's a base thing really. She is a base old woman, and so is he, I daresay. She actually wanted me to give my cause away, to be a veritable Judas to Woman's Suffrage.

MURRAY.—What ho !

NORAH.—She said the Home Secretary — to wit, her footling old husband—had been worn within an inch of the grave, tens of times, by the militants' campaign. She said it went to her heart to see him toiling for Woman's Suffrage—(I didn't know of it at all)—and getting this reward. She smoked Turkish cigarettes like a regular *enfant de Bohème*, or whatever it is. Then she said the General Election was coming. 'The Suffragettes would do a lot of mischief. She wanted to assure me that she was their friend, but they were so young, so misguided, the rank-and-filers. The leaders were so knowing and unscrupulous, and the young women went everywhere and did everything for those who

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

were afraid and too crafty to fire the fuse for themselves. She did not do the trick well—I laughed at her quite frankly.

MURRAY —Oh!

NORAH —Why do you say 'Oh'?

MURRAY —Why did you laugh at her?

NORAH —She said such absurd things by way of reasons. She had about as much reason as an undersized Hoopoe. I say Hoopoe (which I believe is a sort of bird isn't it?) because she spoke among other things of her husband's earnest devotion to the new cause of Hoopoism. It seems to be a sort of Oriental religion without much definiteness. It doesn't seem to have any connection with Hoopoe the bird but with some promenading prophet.

MURRAY —All right. But don't be sacrilegious about it. It may have a meaning—I daresay that most things do.

NORAH —Norman, you're in a strange mood. Why'd you look so solemn?

MURRAY —I had a terrible long talk with old Porteous and it tired me and made me think too.

NORAH —Yes of course it's a funny experience when you come to think of it having tea with a Home Secretary. Well she tried

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to bribe me. There's no other word for it. It was quite undisguised, though I noticed that she was careful to see that Joan wasn't in the room at the time. We were alone. She said Joan had a terrible influence over her—it quite frightened her. She said the maid was such a good person, so firm in all her principles—including politics. But such a fool! I believe her Ladyship had tried to corrupt Joan and make a traitor of her, and get her to deliver the W.L. League into the Home Secretary's hands.

She asked was it not possible to visit the League's offices at night—said she had often wished to investigate their premises, but her husband forbade it for fear she might be suspected of sympathising or mixed up in some police raid.

MURRAY.—Well, get to the point. A woman's windings!

NORAH.—Trite creature! Well, she asked me to come and see her often; said I might try to be a kind of companion to her—she was growing old. I might accept some payment for it—why not? She said my independence could not suffer. I said at once that I'd jump at it; that we really needed help, and that you

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

were ruining your health, earning a mere nothing—

MURRAY —Oh get out!

NORAH —She said then quite frankly that I might let her know from time to time of little things in the policy of the League which would distress her husband. Not everything —only those things that would give him terrible trouble and distress and wretched nights. It was all very simple and, to tell you the truth Norrie I quite loved her.

MURRAY —So you said you'd come?

NORAH —No, I couldn't. I thought about you at home and about the Or and Co debt, and the paw — pawned things — things I hate to think of—I needed them—I loved them little odds and ends as you thought them —I thought of new hats. I'm ashamed to say — I thought most of all of you, dear boy. Dear boy! (*she repeats*) Because I love you you know that don't you?

MURRAY —Why in the name of goodness didn't you accept her offer?

NORAH —Because I loved you. I loved myself. I felt it was an insult. It is an obvious blatant insult. I loved Woman's Suffrage. It's not all tomfoolery. It's not all play acting. But most of all, I did love you.

## THE SYNDICALIST.

I know we would both be ourselves more without any money, than perjured like this.

MURRAY.—Perjured? What a word!

NORAH.—Well, you see how I'm vindicated. Here I come back and find you here with news of an appointment,—and bringing me a present of slippers. But she asked me more than that, or implied it, you see. I can't soil my tongue with it, really, as they say. She showed me—I can't remember the words—that she wanted me to influence you to speak differently—not to talk against Lord Porteous and Lord Home. I had to leave her then. That's what made me get up and go. She offered me another cigarette as I was going and I upset the box. Unladylike, I'm afraid.

MURRAY.—Did you never think of accepting? It might—have been all right.

NORAH.—I thought of murdering.

MURRAY.—Whom? Me? Yourself. We can't live on nothing, Norah.

NORAH.—We'll live on your appointment, then, added to other things.

MURRAY.—Lord Porteous might be just as bad as his wife.

NORAH.—He is; but you haven't consented to anything disgraceful.

MURRAY.—How d'you know?



## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

NORAH —What did you agree to? Hurry up!

MURRAY —To much—to the same—to much the same sort of thing as you—you refused

NORAH —Tell me

(MURRAY takes half a dozen postal orders and a cheque signed by Lord Porteous piles them loosely on the table spreads them out)

MURRAY —I am bought

(Slight pause)

NORAH —Oh, Not me!

(She turns away and covers her head with her arm on the table She sobs bitterly)

MURRAY —Don't Norah It doesn't matter It isn't your disgrace

NORAH —It is—I brought you to it I talked to you about hats and coats and boots, and bullied you

MURRAY —Don't Cheer up Norey Listen I needn't keep the bargain Besides I've not told you yet what it is It isn't very disgraceful We're going to live We'll pay it back to everybody—later

NORAH —Pay it back now

MURRAY —Why All right Do you think it could do us any harm really?

NORAH —I don't know I have a feeling—

## THE SYNDICALIST.

I may be quite unreasonable—that it's somehow an utterly bad thing for you to accept—this sort of thing. It would have been bad enough for me. After all, we're not ancient chivalrists, but there is something wrong in it. Syndicalism is a good thing, Norrie.

MURRAY.—All right. Of course, you're noble in your feelings, and, of course, I'm wrong, as usually happens. There is, however, the living question of hats, and nearer than that, the raging and tearing question of food and coal.

NORAH.—Well, you are always urging me to trust in—

MURRAY.—Yes, I know. And this seemed to come as a reply.

NORAH.—Well, don't you see—

MURRAY.—Isn't there any way of compromising?

NORAH.—I don't believe in compromising. If you let me, Norrie, I'll fake back the money myself.

MURRAY.—When? To-morrow?

NORAH.—To-night. You can come with me.

MURRAY.—Minus 7s. 8d. ! All right ! Leaving debts to the amount of—what is it?—£16 10s. ?—£17 10s. ?

NORAH.—We can't help it.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

MURRAY —Well, let me take it I don't see why you should go

NORAH (*slowly*) —Well, because I am to be trusted You see it's my own idea You are not to be trusted so much, because—the reason's obvious Secondly, because I've thought of something else

(*Pause*)

MURRAY (*seizing her arm lightly at the elbow*) —What have you thought of? Norah, don't you think it's ridiculous for you to go at this hour of night Wait!

NORAH —No it must be to night, because it's dangerous I shall only hand in the packet with a note

MURRAY —Then post it

NORAH —We haven't any stamps We can't post anything unstamped to Lord Porteous—or Lady

MURRAY —I'll get stamps at the tobacconist's before he closes Now will that do? Write your note

NORAH —All right (*She sits down*) Where's ink? (*Dip dip loudly*) No ink at all You know this can't go on Norrie

MURRAY —Then end it!

## THE SYNDICALIST.

NORAH (*dipping again loudly*).—Wait a bit. Don't talk to me.

(*Silence. MURRAY keeps striking matches, but cannot light his pipe, which is practically empty.*)

NORAH (*looking up suddenly*).—And of course you call to-morrow to explain about the returned remittance? I am saying that.

MURRAY.—As you like.

NORAH (*dipping for the last time, and handing him an envelope*).—Gum that; stick it down properly. I have told Lady Porteous that I shall accept her position, and supply any information that may be required.

MURRAY.—What absurdity! She won't hear of it now, after you knocking down the cigarette box.

NORAH.—Oh, she's stupid. She showed in the whole scheme that she was as thick as a wall. I have explained that I "*felt some embarrassment when she made me the generous offer.*" Also she loves her husband more than she can dislike me—even supposing that she dislikes me at all. I shall get round her. You see, I am known to have no special talents. Anyhow, let's try.

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

MURRAY —But—but—what about this? Is it honest? What about the Cause? Do you surrender important secrets of the Suffragette strategy? Do you tell where Miss Dollibell is hidden, and where the dynamite is stored? It's absurd, in you. It's the very thing that was not fit even for poor me!

NORAH —That was different. I will tell a lot of things I think, from time to time. They'll be very important. They'll be very well paid. I'll take great care that they're all untrue!

MURRAY —Norah!

*(They embrace and rush to the door with the letter.)*

*(Curtain.)*

## THE SYNDICALIST.

### SCENE V.—HYDE PARK.

*A month later. The Radical-Conservative Government has been beaten in the recent General Election, so that LORD PORTEOUS is out of office. It is a sunny Saturday afternoon.*

NORMAN MACK MURRAY is on a small portable platform over which stretches a banner bearing the words: "*Women's and Men's Syndicalist and Suffragist League.*" Two women and two men are supporting him; one woman being NORAH, wearing a glorious new hat, with artistic yellow ribbon. Otherwise, too, she is brightly, perhaps showily dressed.

*She holds one pole of the banner, a red-rosetted man holding the other. NORMAN speaks. People come to listen, very gradually, as he proceeds; first one, then another, then two or three*

NORMAN.— . . . And so we have the Home-Porteous Government reduced to its knees, or flung down at our feet. The General Election has spoken the true feeling of the Country. Too long has this infamous crowd of swindlers smirched the face of public life. Lord Home

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

is out of office no more equivocation about  
postal wages Lord Porteous is out of office  
no more backstairs support of rack renters  
No more disgrace to our nation in the eyes of  
the world by the retention of a private criminal  
in public life

(A policeman comes up)

What these men are guilty of no one can  
fathom Let me give you a proof of that  
Here is this Lord Porteous I have the dis-  
honour to be related to him Before I aban-  
doned my futile helpless (and by the by prac-  
tically penniless—for my step father never  
allowed me enough pocket money) life in the  
idle rich class, I knew Lord Porteous fairly  
well He was my third cousin (by marriage)  
My father told me there was a tradition that  
the titles of the Porteous estate had been  
forged long ago—it's like a romance But I  
never could make out the truth of it—I had  
no details I simply used it as a threat I  
stated it openly in the public street (in Trafal-  
gar Square) knowing that my father had prob-  
ably got grounds for what he said He rarely  
spoke without thinking—he was a magistrate

Well, I stated it and Lord Porteous cow-  
ered, when he heard He knew the truth was

## THE SYNDICALIST.

as shameful as I supposed—he must have proofs of it, which are quite inaccessible to me.

*(An old man, listening intently, small, bent, queer, dissipated-looking, but with sharply shutting mouth and correct though passionless elocution.)*

OLD MAN.—And who is murdering the people !

NORMAN.—As our friend says, though somewhat irrelevantly, he has been charged—and perhaps rightly enough—with murdering the people.

*(The policeman begins to take notes.)*

There is the case of the people of Errith, village. As a matter of fact I did not know the whole facts. I said my view of it in Trafalgar Square, and here too, and I'll not repeat it now. The people of Errith, in the West of Scotland, suffered from bad water. In every way they suffered. Lord Porteous was on the Local Council, and they say he influenced them against expenditure because the new water-works would spoil the amenities of his land.

I knew nothing more. I charged Lord Porteous. I waved sporrans in the air. He tried to close my mouth.

NORAH *(loudly)*.—Gwen !



## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

MURRAY —What? Oh, yes, well he showed me plainly that the subject was one he couldn't bear me to touch

OLD MAN (automatically with diabolic clearness and quietness) —And he is encouraging the Roman Catholic Church!

MURRAY —Perhaps so! (surprised) who knows? I daresay it's so (Continuing) Well, he's beaten. I'm sorry it's by our other adversaries the Conservative Radicals. That can't be helped. It always is so—if one wins it, is at the expense of the other. But at any rate Lord Porteous and Co. are out of power. The responsibilities of office trouble them not further. Who has been most instrumental in bringing about their defeat? Undoubtedly the Women Suffragists

OLD MAN —No, no!

MURRAY —Everybody knows it's that—every election these women have put formal candidates and fought the fight of them has got elected—even none though of course this old stick-in-the-nut would not let them in even if it had been. But they have whacked the late Government, split the progressive vote—ha ha! progressive vote!—bombshelled the Government out of office—(cries of 'shame!').

## THE SYNDICALIST.

*policeman turns to a spectator and laughs*)——and heckled the Porteous-Home Government to pieces. *Vive the women ! Votes for women !* I will now give place to my wife.

NORAH.—Only a short speech from me.

(A VOICE.—Ladies first !)

NORAH.—Yes, it ought to have been ladies first ; but you see Pat always has more to say ! (*gently*). He has said everything to the point. Even what he said about the women is to the point—which is said to be rare in a man (*simpering prettily*). Well, we did win the victory. We did put up a fine fight—though I say it—and won a moral and rational victory ! But why should *I* be speaking about it ? We have had enough speaking this afternoon. I call upon the “organiser of victory,” the one who, before and behind the scenes, organised victory, planned every brilliant step, said nothing but devised everything. Miss Joan Müller, alias Miss Dolibell, alias Mrs. Porter, alias Bobby Simmons, the boot-boy, to give us a speech.

(*Joan stands forward. She is still grey. She removes a pair of black spectacles.*)

JOAN.—Ladies and gentlemen. I'm sorry to say I've lost my place at Lord Porteous's. As you know (*the crowd thickens : the policeman*

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

But it crept with the chill  
From the lost dead sea,  
It came with the chill,  
He spread in the chill  
His ghastly ill will  
To mine and to me

What hate can rehearse  
His hate from the sea?  
The wings of the hearse  
Hang heavy on me!  
But worse that curse  
Can God disperse  
That merciless curse  
From mine and me?

## LAST LIGHT.

*(This poem is supposed to be the expression of  
a mind overthrown by grief.)*

God's dark hand is over the moon,  
But God has never spared me pain,  
He that put the flame in my brain  
(And there He erred, for it does as well as  
the moon;

It lights my thoughts as white as the moon;  
And my heart, though not so bright, is never  
beaten :

Ho ! and though it be soon heat-eaten,  
I shall end and sorn Him as soon\*  
—Scorn Him as soon !)

He cheats Himself, and there are laws,  
It seems, that HE didn't cause.  
He might have known—(A God and a dunce !)  
That He cannot crush me two ways at once.  
And the star in my little head is a noble thing.

\* *Sorn Him as soon—  
Scorn Him as soon:*

This is an attempt to introduce one of those pathetic half-paralytic slips of the tongue which often accompany mental confusion

## THE ONLY FOOL

After ages of barbarism the world at last became civilised. A statesman had expressed his fear that civilisation might come to an end if wars went on but meantime the world was civilised. Various people had had their doubts about this, and actively expressed them but these persons in the course of time died or were otherwise removed and a great unanimity possessed mankind. This is all history, but it is history of the hypothetical future. There was only one fool left in the whole world (think of that!) one miserable man who had resisted all the efforts of thirtieth-century education to make him wise. He disbelieved in wars whereas wars had come to be accepted (partly by the aid of the very statesmen who had deprecated them) as essential to civilisation. He rejected what was called "Christian doctrine," and spoke meaninglessly of Jesus Christ, as one who came to bring peace, brotherhood and a foretaste of heaven on earth not solely a prophet of life after death.

## THE ONLY FOOL.

This man was of course segregated, and lived in a pretty tree-sheltered house, which country people looked at inquisitively and called "the Asylum." Fortunately he was the only fool, and the Asylum was therefore empty, except for him, and very lonely. All round the Asylum was a semi-country district, degraded out of recognition. Its population were slaves, not ignorant but fed with exactly what knowledge would serve their masters best. Their masters ranged up through varying shades of tyranny and cynicism to the great plutocrats of the towns, whose god was a politician of noble eloquence. Everyone in that land was wise, too wise to do without religion; therefore this eloquent weaver of words' (simple, but awfully pointed) became their idol.

What a fool the only fool was! He disbelieved in autocracy. His beliefs were more laughable than his doubts. He believed the minimum wage and "education" of the serfs around him were only calculated to keep them helpless tools of tyrants. He had, all his queer life, resisted wars and all oppressions; he hated bloodshed, which in one form or another had become an amusement, as popular as tobacco, with those who had power. He took little walks outside, and talked, madly, with the

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR &c

labourers advising them to 'combine', but, having looked up this word in their Government dictionaries and failed to find it, they only laughed and laughed. He urged them to make one great benign Commonwealth out of the world they fell on the grass in ecstasies of derision. Meeting rich men in the more modern equivalents of top hats and astrakhan coat collars he admonished them to give their wealth to the movement for equality, they were polite enough to restrain their faces and clever enough to know that equality was a mathematical term, just like 'squaring the circle' an abstraction to please faddy brains.

They smiled and said this fool was remarkably 'interesting' and 'cultured' considering.

After years of such scornful reception, the fool broke down ran mad screeched, tore out of the asylum gate broke an iron stake from a railing and stabbed babies and men to death.

The fool was seized of course, for it would not do to have him running about stabbing perhaps some plutocrat. 'What's to be done with this fool?' asked the sergeant of police panting as four men coovoyed the murderer, in handcuffs back to the great specialist who visited at the pretty country house.

## THE MIRACLE.

“ A fool ! ” the specialist exclaimed. “ He is no fool. His mind has completely recovered. He needs an outlet, that’s all, an outlet for his talent. He is of good social extraction, and well-off. The Secretary of Eternal Wars is retiring. This gentleman should be nominated to succeed him.”

There was an awe-struck silence at this presage of honour for one so recently despised. But the silence was broken by the ex-fool crying, “ Yes, give me blood ! ”

## THE MIRACLE.

Balder drank. It was asserted that he could drink four times as much as other men, and yet remain sober : in which case he must have exceeded that fourth dimension, for he was often seen drunk. It affected his verse, some critics thought, favourably ; others considered that he had a surer touch when temperate. In ecstasies of Scotch whiskey (which, Balder himself said, was rare, meaning the whiskey ; but something equally effective must often have



## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

taken its place) he would sing in Swinburnian rhythms as thus —

When moons are abeam on the ways of dream  
And the murmurs of myriad deeps are drear,  
I turn from the top of the drift and drop  
In the dark and doomful mere  
And the deeps then glisten—I listen ! I listen !  
Thou callest I come, my dear !

The otioseness and debility of his lines were atoned for by a sweetness of sentiment which made certain semi-educated elderly ladies love his little books.

They were sure he was young with raven locks and a brow like that of Browning in his early portraits. But the real Balder was if anything, balder than his name and his forehead was rather broad than high.

A nodule between his eyes showed where he fell the first time that he really enjoyed Scotch. All this is farcical but there was a solemn side to Balder's case and if I thought farce and intense seriousness could not co-exist in one story I should not tell his tale. Fourteen years ago, Balder's mother died and the last thing she begged of him was to leave the drink alone and to read his Testament. He read the Testament and he found there that water was made wine at the wedding and that

## THE MIRACLE.

gave the maudlin oblique mind of the man an excuse for disregarding the other part of his mother's dying appeal.

It was only one out of a hundred excuses that he sought out for himself.

One other excuse was that he was bald and forty, while his readers thought him young and brilliant and attractive; and they sent admiring letters to him, and it sickened him to respond falsely. Yet he knew if he wrote as the man he truly was—rather dull, laborious, and anxious to earn a living by verse, prose, statistics, editing, anything—he would never enhance, or even maintain, his position as a celebrity. So he wrote whimsically, by the aid of whiskey and great efforts, and he sent out-of-date portraits of himself to the admirers (carefully selected), and sometimes portraits of his younger brother, Walter, a much better-looking man, who had died unknown. This second death was a deep grief to "old" Balder, as the clubmen called him, and he lived more and more in his seclusion, opposite the house of a great poet in a beautiful suburb, whither he had gone trying to catch the great poet's spirit from the old house that he had once occupied. But no fancies came to Balder. No, not even when he drank cham-

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

pagne (a red letter day) did he gain inspiration his verse was always weak, his prose heavy his statistics were inaccurate and his editing was unintelligible The lines on his tight brow deepened the colour of the skin became visibly port wine like the eyes watery the gait of the man aged twenty five years before its time

He lived alone One evening a miracle happened to him It was like this—he had been so drunk that he opened the New Testament thinking it was a telephone directory Again he read the story of Cana Water was turned into wine He lay back in the comfortable little arm chair belonging to his landlady, and tried to visualize the scene, not because Christ was to him anything but the name of a kind of rite or tradition which many people conformed to—as they conformed to the wearing of collars and ties but because he sought to make a picture of the scene and perhaps turn it to some account One never knew what would take he had tried lately to be as novel as possible in his subjects the treatment was commonplace once a fairly new setting for an old theme, or (if conceivable) a new theme had been obtained

Christ a bearded figure But why always

## THE MIRACLE.

bearded? The face was inevitably bearded—all the faces were the same, within limits. Could not the real Christ have a tuft on the chin, like Robert Louis Stevenson, or a mere moustache—like Mare, the athlete; or a pair of whiskers—like Bright, Mill or Gladstone. Mill and Bright were almost ideal men; Cobden, too; and they all wore side-whiskers.

So the half-drowsy mind wandered.

Something new. The miracle ought to be treated anew. Yet, no! What had taken him, to imagine that such a subject could be right? It was too scriptural, too sacred. Even the most mundane of editors showed an absurd reverence for such themes by avoiding them; the name of the founder of the churches, of the source from which Charing Cross and St. Paul's and all the rest of it came, was never mentioned, except in the journals officially allotted to that kind of writing. Everything had its place! He dozed and dozed, and his tobacco-pouch fell into the fender, and the stirring of the coals in the half-dark only made him lift an eye to droop again. He lurched, and caught himself up, and gave a drunken grunt, and lay back again, peaceful, his mind mazing from faces to numbers, from numbers to words, from scenes in the country to

## THE FOOL NEXT DOOR, &c

quarrels at the club, from a heating in boyhood to the end of a candle which gradually lost its dying red gold crown upon the wick ' Gradually, very gravitationally ' he said to himself And then he dreamed as he had known all the time that he would do He dreamed that he drank Ah, such wine ! ah, such wine ! Or was it spirits ?—so exhilarant, so quickening ? He sat there by the long low table, there were cushions but not very soft ones behind and under him John was there, and dear old Peter strangely young, and the doctor Luke (who was less like a doctor than the old fisherman and had rather an empty but sweet smile)—and Judas with the hard set will wilful setting up (as it were) a psychic barrier of adamant between him and all good nature, hating to have a service done for him, lest he might love the doer and relent—and others

The dear Lord himself was indescribable Only seen in glints Was he indeed alive ? Was he in these old human rags of robes ? Did not the times dress more graciously ?

\* \* \* \* \*

This was the miracle Balder drank And as he sucked the last sweetness of the cup it was refilled, by the hand of Christ himself

## THE MIRACLE.

The yellow wine ! The red wine ! Both, both, glorious, glorious ! Death passed away ; sleep was unnecessary. Calm and energy inspired all. Earth smiled. Fame, intellect, work, were so easy, so easy, so unrivalled, so unbit- ter, so sweet, sweet !

\* \* \* \* \*

And Christ touched the glass (or was it a cup ?) as each was filled, and the wine became water, but ah ! water—the water of life !